

**A COMPARISON OF ENGLISH VOCABULARY INSTRUCTION FOR
ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THREE ELEMENTARY
SCHOOLS FROM A U.S.-MEXICO BORDER COMMUNITY**

A Record of Study

by

CARMEN AMPARO POMPA

Submitted to the Office of Graduate and Professional Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Chair of Committee,	John Helfeldt
Committee Members,	Juan Lira
	Randel Brown
	Janet Hammer
Head of Department,	Lynn M. Burlbaw

May 2016

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

Copyright 2016 Carmen Amparo Pompa

ABSTRACT

This study is a comparative investigation of English vocabulary instruction for English language learners. Three elementary schools from a U.S.-Mexico border community were chosen purposely and studied using qualitative research methods. The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast vocabulary instructional strategies that promoted academic reading achievement in the STAAR reading assessment with ELLs among two high-achieving schools and one low-achieving elementary school as measured by the Texas Education Agency.

The participants in this qualitative study consisted of 18 teachers: 6 teachers per campus and 3 principals. The methods of data collection were classroom observations, student artifacts, and one-on-one teacher interviews. Data were utilized, coded, categorized, and were compared to create emerging themes. The narrative data provided empowering stories in education, frustrating incidents about their education, monitoring of education, and caring in education.

According to these 18 teachers, teaching vocabulary is not an easy task, especially not for English language learners. Because teachers understand that accountability measures are designed to ensure that all students in the United States, including those who speak languages other than English, meet state and national reading and writing standards, there is no time to waste. This study highlighted the strengths of these teachers to provide effective vocabulary instruction for English language learners

and how they coped with identified frustrations in their pedagogy in order to assist the ELLs in achieving academic reading success.

DEDICATION

This record of study is dedicated to my family, but first and foremost to my parents, Jesús Manuel and Oralia Pompa. I truly love you and appreciate your patience while I completed this awesome goal of mine. You two were truly an inspiration, and therefore, this dedication is merely in gratitude for everything you have given me as a daughter, a professional, but most importantly as a human being. Dad, you always told me to get an education, to obtain a degree, and never to settle for less. Dad, I am an educator, a director, and today I am proud to give you a Doctorate in Education—the highest level possible. Mom, you have always been my biggest motivator for whatever it was that I was doing, and I thank you for believing in me. Always there, always by my side, and for all of this I want to tell you both—I adore you!

Este acontecimiento de estudio está dedicado a mi familia, pero principalmente a mis queridos padres, Jesús Manuel y Oralia Pompa. Ustedes dos fueron mi inspiración y mi fuerza, así que esta dedicación es un pedacito del gran agradecimiento que yo les puedo ofrecer. Aparte de todos los obstáculos que hemos sobrepasado como familia ustedes me han enseñado que en la vida se tiene que luchar para conseguir lo querido. Papi, tú siempre me has inculcado la educación, obtener una profesión y nunca ser *del montón*. Papá, mi profesión está en la educación, soy directora, y ahora te entrego un Doctorado en la Educación—el nivel más alto. Mami, tu siempre has sido mi motivadora hacia cualquier proyecto y meta que a mí se me ocurría, mil gracias. Siempre a mi lado, siempre apoyándome y por todos estos hechos les quiero decir que—¡Los Adoro!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. J. Helfeldt, and my committee members, Dr. J. Lira, Dr. R. Brown, Dr. D. Smith (RIP), and Dr. J. Hammer, for their guidance and support throughout the course of this research. A special gratitude goes to Dr. J. Lira for providing me with multiple hours of support toward the completion of this paper. I also want to thank Dr. Georgeanne Ramon-Reuthinger and my editor Marilyn Oliva; although you came in to assist me toward the end of my journey, I could not have done all of this without you. ¡Gracias de Corazon a todos Ustedes!

I also want to extend my appreciation to the local district that provided me with the opportunity to acquire the necessary research for my study. Special thanks go out to the elementary teachers and principals who were willing to participate in the study.

Gratefulness goes out to my best friends, Monica and Melissa, who patiently wondered when I was going to complete this degree. Thankfulness also goes to my poker friends, Gilbert, Ismael, Laura, Mayra, Julian, Luz, Ponce, Arcie, Alfredo, Martha, and Victor, who really did not understand why I was putting myself through this. I also appreciate my comadres: Cousin Carla, Irma, Adriana, and Monica, who are great company especially during the month of my birthday. In addition, my Godchildren, Enoch (RIP), Karyme, Stephanie, Alyssa, Aiden, Victoria and Christian, you make me super proud. Thanks to my boss Mr. David H. Gonzalez, a great leader and an inspiration to many. A huge THANK YOU goes out to Ms. Sonia Betancourt, my 3rd grade teacher from Kanoon Magnet Elementary in Chicago, Illinois. She taught me in

many ways to always persevere and to never give up. She was my inspiration to becoming an educator, especially a bilingual certified teacher. Being an English language learner myself has taught me many lessons, but most importantly to always face life with a smile because anything is possible. ¡Mil Gracias a ti Sonia, mírame ahora soy Doctora en la Educación!

Finally, thanks to my sister and two brothers, Claudia, Pablo, and Papo. Claudia is the sister everyone wishes they had because she is understanding, caring, and sometimes grouchy. Through the years, we have become a lot closer, and we have determined that it is okay to disagree, especially when we are buying Christmas presents for our entire family and buying décor for our new home. Pablo, you are my baby brother; however, having a family of your own has really given you that sense of adulthood and maturity. Your wife Adriana, stepdaughter Alyssa and, of course, your son Aiden have brought many happy moments into our family. Papo, although we argue a lot, I want you to know that I am extremely proud to be your sister. You have a fantastic business and you are a very dedicated boss and most importantly a dad. You and Aimee have given us a niece, Nina Sophia, and a nephew, Joaquin Manuel, who changed our lives since the minute they were born. My dearest niece and nephews, I want you three to take this as a challenge, so that when you grow into adulthood, you get a degree and study to your highest potential. I expect nothing less from all of you.

In addition, my God, through your guidance, I have lived my life to the fullest potential, and I am very blessed. You know what I need and when I need it. Thanks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
LIST OF TABLES	xi
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	6
Purpose of the Study	12
Research Questions	13
Theoretical Framework	14
Definition of Terms	17
Organization of the Study	20
Summary	21
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	23
Introduction	23
Programs Available for ELL Students	23
The Stages of Second Language Acquisition.....	27
The Relationship of Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Performance for ELLs	31
What Constitutes an Effective Vocabulary Program?.....	32
Features of Explicit and Effective Vocabulary Instruction	37
Local Data of Reading Achievement Between ELLs and Native English Speakers.....	42
Professional Development Needs for Teaching Vocabulary	48
The Model of Culturally Responsive Teaching of Vocabulary for ELLs	50
Summary	52

	Page
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY	54
Introduction	54
Research Questions	54
Descriptive Case Study	55
Campus Selection Procedures	57
Data Collection Procedures	69
Control for Researcher Biases	73
Qualitative Analysis Procedures	77
Limitations Found in the Study	85
Ethical Considerations	87
Summary	89
CHAPTER IV THE FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS	90
Introduction	90
Procedures for Data Analysis	91
Classroom Observation Tool	92
Teacher Interview Questionnaire	95
Artifacts Collected During the Study	97
Responses to the Research Questions	98
Interpretations of the Findings for the Research Questions	136
Emerging Themes	158
Summary	171
CHAPTER V DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH, IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS	173
Introduction	173
Constructing Meaning Through Discussions Within the Research Questions	174
Conclusions Based on the Analysis of the Data Collected	190
Implications for Further Research	195
Implications for Practice	197
Final Recommendations	201
REFERENCES	203
APPENDIX A	238
APPENDIX B	240

	Page
APPENDIX C	241
APPENDIX D	244
APPENDIX E.....	247
APPENDIX F	248
APPENDIX G	249
APPENDIX H	251

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	Page
5.1 Sample of the recoding of themes based on the teacher interviews: HA1	195

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	Page
2.1 Scores of 3 rd Grade Reading STAAR Assessment for 2012-2013.....	43
2.2 Scores of 4 th Grade Reading STAAR Assessment for 2012-2013.....	45
2.3 Scores of 5 th Grade Reading STAAR Assessment for 2012-2013.....	47
3.1 Demographic Data of Participants from HA1	66
3.2 Demographic Data of Participants from HA2.....	66
3.3 Demographic Data of Participants from LA	67
3.4 Codes Assigned to Participants from HA1	88
3.5 Codes Assigned to Participants from HA2	88
3.6 Codes Assigned to Participants from LA	88
4.1 Classroom Observation for HA1	101
4.2 Classroom Observation for HA2.....	113
4.3 Classroom Observation for LA	125

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

There is a multitude of literature on reading instruction and English language learners (ELLs). Like most hot topics, there are differing views on what is the best method for teaching reading, teaching ELLs, and teaching reading to ELLs. “There are over 5 million English language learners (ELLs) representing one in every nine public school students in grades K-12” (Goldenberg, 2011, p. 684). The National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (2006) reported a 150% increase of ELLs from the year 2000 and beyond, when the overall school population has grown by only 20%. Demographic evidence has suggested that this population already has a presence in many of the nation’s school districts. For example, in 2002, 43% of the nation’s teachers had at least one ELL in their classrooms (Shorr, 2006; U.S. Department of Education & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2003).

Humes, Jones, and Ramirez (2011) reported in the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, an estimated number of Hispanics to be about 50.5 million, or about 16% of the U.S. population, up 43% from the 2000 census. The increase of over 15 million Hispanics from 2000 to 2010 accounted for more than half of the total school population increase in the United States during that time (Humes et al., 2011). Additionally, data collected in 2007 by the U.S. Department of Education, indicated that a substantial proportion of Hispanic students in grades 4th and 8th were indeed English language learners. These two

facts—the growing size of the Hispanic population in the United States and the percentage of 4th- and 8th-grade Hispanic students that were English language learners—helped to explain the achievement gap between Hispanic and White 4th- and 8th-graders (Humes et al., 2011).

Closing the Hispanic-White achievement gap continues to be a challenge, as this gap is increasing over time. While the Hispanic students' average scores have increased across the assessment years, White students continue to produce higher scores at about a 25-point difference, on all assessments (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011; Humes et al., 2011). Nonetheless, school report cards, published online, quantified how successful individual schools were with earning proficient rankings for all of their students (Texas Education Agency, 2012-2013). Because annually administered standardized tests were reported as disaggregated data, struggling students and those challenged because of race, culture, or low socioeconomic status affected the overall school ranking. Furthermore, it became essential for schools to identify how each individual subgroup of children learned, hence my interest in ELLs. The focus of this study was to investigate vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures that promote academic achievement in reading among native Spanish speaking ELLs in a U.S.-Mexico border community.

Researchers stated that nearly 80% of ELLs speak Spanish as their first language (Zehler et al., 2003), and they also represent a heterogeneous population in terms of ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic background, and immigration status, with the highest generation of students in the United States (August & Hakuta, 1997) and heterogeneous because of the variety of Hispanic language backgrounds. According to

Capps, Fix, Murray, Passel and Herwanto (2005), ELLs in the United States come from over 400 different language backgrounds. These language backgrounds include but are not limited to Mexican, Cuban, Dominican, and Puerto Rican. Even more surprising is that most ELLs of Hispanic descent were born in the United States. Among elementary-age ELLs, 76% were born in the United States; and among middle and high school-age ELLs, 56% were born in this country. However, about 80% of the ELLs' parents were born outside of the United States (Capps et al., 2005).

Furthermore, ELLs have a tendency to exhibit lower academic achievement (particularly in literacy) than their non-ELL peers, and similar negative trends are observed in other educational outcomes such as grade repetition and school dropout rate (Abedi, 2002; August & Hakuta, 1997; Wallace, 2007; Zehler et al., 2003).

“Consequently, most ELLs in the United States are at risk for poor school outcomes not only because of language, but also because of socioeconomic factors” (Goldenberg, 2011, p. 685) because they live in poverty. The need for change within the educational system continues to be a national priority when the economic impact of failing students was studied. A correlation between lower education and unhealthy lifestyles, lack of insurance, potential for incarceration, and lifetime earnings was verified by McKinsey and Company (2009). Nonetheless, where students live should not determine their ability to learn; therefore, national attention is focused on the need to provide a “highly qualified” teacher in every classroom and reduce the achievement gap for ELLs (Hemphill & Vanneman, 2011; Roberts, 2005; Wood, Harmon, & Hedrick, 2004).

Moreover, disaggregated reporting of proficiency scores over several years indicated that many of the ELLs, students with special needs, and students of low socioeconomic status in the urban elementary schools in the United States were labeled as “at-risk” for school failure (Cortiella, 2009; Florian & McLaughlin, 2008); this does not exclude ELLs living in rural areas. In spite of years of educational financial support to address the problem, many minority students, particularly those in urban districts, continue to struggle; therefore, it is critical that data-driven reading instructional strategies that work for minority populations be identified and implemented (Lane, 2007; Reeves, 2008).

However, there are success stories of schools whose disaggregated reporting of reading and mathematics scores do show improvement. Understanding the lessons found in these successful outlier schools can be a powerful tool to facilitate narrowing the achievement gap in other schools. This study identified and compared vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures between two elementary schools in a U.S.-Mexico border community that repeatedly achieved a high degree of success on standardized reading assessments despite educating a challenging minority population and a school with a similar population that repeatedly achieved less success on standardized reading tests. Additionally, the research identified commonalities between the high-achieving elementary schools of research-based vocabulary strategies to improve vocabulary acquisition altogether, which is known to be a challenging area for ELLs (Feldman & Kinsella, 2005; Walsh, 2009).

Tompkins (2003) agreed that vocabulary acquisition can be difficult for ELLs because they are learning both the oral and written forms of words at the same time. Vacca and Vacca (2003) also reported that vocabulary acquisition can be difficult for ELLs. Often, students who do not have a vocabulary-rich home environment do not have the support necessary to develop their academic vocabulary for school (Vacca & Vacca, 2003).

Diverse models and theories of reading development are consistent in the concept that the ability to read for students is based upon the growth of two sets of early reading skills: (a) skills that are associated with decoding (such as phonological processing abilities and word reading) and (b) skills associated with comprehension (such as vocabulary knowledge) (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; Roberts, 2005; Snow, 1991; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 2001). Studies that have included ELLs focused on vocabulary knowledge because students who are ELLs are dramatically behind their English-speaking peers in the number of English vocabulary words they have acquired when they enter kindergarten (Silverman, 2007; Tabors & Snow, 2001).

In addition, the implementation of cultural schema plays a major role due to the fact that the ELLs come from different cultural backgrounds and the importance of cultural factors becoming more relevant in the delivery of vocabulary instruction for these students is of major importance (Yi & Zhang, 2006). Vocabulary knowledge plays a critical role in reading comprehension, learning, and success in all academic areas for all students (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Undoubtedly, there needs to be a way of instructing ELLs effectively in vocabulary

development because prior research on ELLs also indicates that vocabulary knowledge is essential for academic growth across the curriculum (Barcoft, 2004; Flanigan & Greenwood, 2007; Snow & Kim, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

In the past two decades, schools in the United States have seen a dramatic increase in the number of students for whom a language other than English is spoken at home. These students are known as English language learners or ELLs. The federal definition of an English language learner is:

one who has sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and whose difficulties may deny such individual the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is in English or to participate fully in our society due to one or more of the following reasons: 1) was not born in the US or whose native language is a language other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; 2) is a Native American or Alaska Native or who is a native resident of the Outlying Areas and comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on such individual's level of English language proficiency; or 3) is migratory and whose native language is other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant. (Public Law 103-382, sec. 7501 as cited in Rhodes, Ochoa, & Ortiz, 2005, pp. 1-2)

The education of ELLs was specifically addressed by No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2001), but additionally supported by The Bilingual Education Act, now designated by the federal government as Title III. This Act provides federal aid to ELLs with an expressed goal of increasing content academics. An intense instructional focus upon the development of the English language along with required academic content to prepare the students for the State's standardized assessment to be taken by these students since the first year in U.S. schools. Teaching culturally and ethnically diverse students

was identified as the responsibility of all school staff rather than solely ELL specialists because of the profound influence a student's social background has on academic achievement (Barone, 2006; Graves, 2009).

Biemiller and Slonim (2001) found that ELLs' reading in their first language with an estimated reading and speaking vocabulary of 5,000-7,000 words before beginning formal reading instruction in schools, still scored poorly in English reading vocabulary when they were assessed in their second language. As mentioned previously, Hispanic ELLs across the United States tend to score lower on state assessments than White students (Humes et al., 2011). Locally, in this U.S.-Mexico border community, where school districts reflect more than 90% of students as Hispanic ELLs, the problem of low academic scores is very evident.

The 2010 Census of Population and Housing Report reported that 95.6% of the city's population is indeed of Hispanic origin (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). If schools in this U.S.-Mexico border community are to provide a quality education for all children, it is imperative that teachers implement empirically sound practices for teaching vocabulary, especially since ELLs consistently underperform when compared to their peers in academic settings (Humes et al., 2011; Moss & Puma, 1995; Snow & Biancarosa, 2003; Wainer, 2004).

Fewer than 13% of teachers in the nation have received professional development to prepare them for teaching linguistically and culturally diverse students (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004; Vitale & Romance, 2008). This lack of professional development is reflected locally as well, where only one session per year (if

any) is geared toward the teaching of vocabulary in general (Electronic Registrar Online [ERO], 2013). It is not uncommon to find untrained paraprofessionals acting as English-language teachers for ELLs locally (ERO, 2013) and across the United States (Echevarria, Short, & Powers, 2006; Lavadenz, 1994; Pickett, 1999; Rueda, Monzo, & Higareda, 2004). Consequently, it is extremely important for well-prepared teachers to provide ELLs with effective vocabulary instruction to help improve their reading performance.

Measures over the past 30 years indicate that fewer minority students were considered proficient in reading, and they scored lower on standardized tests when compared to their non-minority peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2007; Zajda, 2009). In April 2000, the National Reading Panel (NRP) concluded that the cognitive process of reading comprehension is an integration of complex abilities. Moreover, reading comprehension cannot be understood without investigating the essential role of vocabulary learning and instruction as well as its development. Furthermore, after reviewing 50 studies from 1979 to the late 1990s that met the panel's strict criteria, the researchers on the panel determined that the role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension is crucial and necessary to make gains in reading comprehension (NRP, 2000).

Moreover, the significant role vocabulary knowledge plays within comprehension has long been recognized in education dating back to 1925 (Boulware-Gooden, Carreker, Thornhill, & Joshi, 2007; Whipple, as cited in National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Since that time, relationships between

vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension have been supported time and time again in the research literature (Fukkink & deGlopper, 1998; Graves, 2009; Klesius & Searls, 1990; National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000; Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986).

Although vocabulary is of extreme importance to oral and written language comprehension, there have been relatively few experimental studies focused on English vocabulary teaching among elementary-school language-minority (ELLs) children reported in the last 25 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). On the contrary, a wealth of research on vocabulary learning among monolingual English speakers has been reported, enough to justify the inclusion of vocabulary as a key component of reading instruction in the report of the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000). Furthermore, the National Reading Panel review emphasized that instructors should not rely on single methods for teaching vocabulary, but on a variety of methods (NRP, 2000). First, vocabulary should be taught directly—apart from a larger narrative or text—and indirectly—as words are encountered in a larger text with the importance of multiple exposures to new vocabulary words emphasized (NRP, 2000). Vocabulary words should also be taught to meet the needs of the diverse learner.

The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act (ESEA), known as the NCLB of 2001, promoted a disciplined approach to school accountability for all students; furthermore, that approach included a focus on student achievement over time, bound by an emphasis to determine strategies to close the achievement gap between low-achieving students and their peers (Hess & Petrilli, 2009). The law promoted a

disciplined approach to school accountability with a goal of universal proficiency in reading and mathematics by the year 2014 (Hardman & Dawson, 2008; Hess & Petrilli, 2009).

In addition, it was noted in the NCLB Act, the reporting of at-risk populations as well (Cortiella, 2009; Education Trust, 2003). Ultimately, four major subgroups of at-risk students were identified: (a) economically disadvantaged students, (b) students with disabilities, (c) students with limited English proficiency, and (d) students from major racial and ethnic groups (Center for Public Education, 2006). Furthermore, The No Child Left Behind legislation mandated that all students, in all subgroups, make continuous progress in all rigorous academic programs (Yell, 2006). The same law imposed requirements that included fiscal sanctions and corrective actions on those schools and districts that did not meet standards for their minority students (Hardman & Dawson, 2008).

As educators, we are facing a state of urgency in vocabulary knowledge (teachers teaching it and ELLs developing it) and should support ELLs who experience slow vocabulary development. By providing ELLs with effective vocabulary learning strategies, their vocabularies will increase and their academic language will be enhanced (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). In addition, these students “may be at risk of being diagnosed as learning disabled, when in fact their limitation is due to limited English vocabulary and poor understanding of English that results in part from this limitation” (August et al., 2005, p. 50).

As a former administrator at a local elementary school, teachers would approach me with questions, such as: “I don’t understand why the students have so many challenges comprehending the story?” and “Isn’t vocabulary something that students should already have?” Being an instructional leader, I would present different strategies for vocabulary development stressing that without such knowledge, the students would not comprehend any readings. In addition, I would also emphasize how vocabulary and comprehension are not innate; we should provide our students with those learning strategies in order to improve their academics. Therefore, ways to begin to address these problems are to enhance teacher knowledge and teaching skills within the area of vocabulary instruction.

These skills include for teachers to be better prepared with knowledge regarding the selection of targeted vocabulary words to teach (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2002; Graves, 2009). Furthermore, teachers need to provide instruction that includes multiple exposures to target vocabulary and systematic review and integration of vocabulary words within and between lessons (Baumann & Kame’enui, 2004; Lugo-Neris, Jackson, & Goldstein, 2010).

Although in this U.S.-Mexico border community, the majority of the students are identified as ELL Hispanics, they still score lower in state reading assessments when compared to the minority White students. In the next chapter, more precise data will be presented of the local student population, and it will become obvious that in most, if not all, of the grade levels analyzed the achievement of the White students is twice as high as that of the Hispanic ELL students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast vocabulary instructional strategies that promoted academic reading achievement in the STAAR reading assessment with ELLs among two high-achieving schools and one low-achieving school. Located in the same school district within a U.S.-Mexico border community, the two high-achieving schools consistently earned acceptable scores for subgroups as Hispanics, ELLs, and economically disadvantaged as well as their total population on the state-mandated State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) reading assessment. These high-achieving campuses were rated as exemplary under TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills) reading assessment. The low-achieving school has consistently earned lower scores on the STAAR reading assessment and TAKS reading assessment as well.

Using the Schema Theoretical approach (Ajideh, 2003) with the organized background knowledge of vocabulary words, themes were identified to determine what vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures the teachers in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades at those high-achieving schools are implementing to successfully achieve higher passing reading scores and whether these same or different vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures are implemented by teachers in the low-achieving school. Data were collected from teacher interviews in order to gather information about their vocabulary instruction knowledge. Classroom observations were also conducted in order to observe the frequency of vocabulary instruction being implemented, and digital

pictures of student artifacts were collected and examined to achieve a more concrete descriptive case study of the selected schools.

This process was intended to help identify consistency across teacher interviews, classroom observations, and these artifacts. Findings from this study will provide valuable information that can address the goal of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2001) that all students be proficient in reading by the year 2014 and locally as a focus to improve professional development trainings to improve vocabulary instruction or to make vocabulary instruction more effective (Elliot & Thurlow, 2006; Hess & Petrilli, 2009).

Research Questions

Nagy and Scott (2000) reminded us that it is imperative to provide teachers with the necessary instructional knowledge and practices needed to construct an educational environment that engages students in rich English language experiences, so that students become fascinated with words both inside and outside the classroom and for the rest of their lives.

Overall, the stakes for ELLs have been raised significantly as states and federal programs have restructured their accountability measures; the NCLB Act of 2001 is an admirable goal but one that requires a specific plan for ELLs. Such a plan must include teachers' use of instructional practices that will facilitate students' English academic literacy development so they can meet the high standards in all academic areas. (Echevarria et al., 2006, p. 198)

Moreover, it was clearly understood that the ultimate goal of effective vocabulary instruction is to provide and prepare students with the understanding and skills necessary for lifelong reading abilities in order to succeed in their lives.

Vocabulary knowledge is an essential component of reading, and it is important to

develop it in order to achieve the comprehension of text (Boulware-Gooden et al., 2007; Lehr, Osborn, & Hiebert, 2004; Wallace, 2007; Walsh, 2009). To examine this issue, the following questions guided the investigation:

1. What are the vocabulary instructional procedures identified from the classroom observations, the student artifacts, and the teacher interviews in the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?
2. Is there evidence of culturally responsive teaching among the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?
3. Are there differences and similarities among vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures evidenced from the teacher interviews in each of the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school? And if so, what are they?

Theoretical Framework

The following qualitative study implemented the role of schema theory and vocabulary development as the main theoretical perspective in order to investigate further through qualitative themes, the factors contributing to the reading success of two acceptable schools and the lack of success in a third school, as identified by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), from a U.S.-Mexico border community. “A schema (plural schemata), is a hypothetical mental structure for representing generic concepts stored in the memory, such as a framework, a plan, or a script” (Ajideh, 2003, p. 4). Ajideh (2003) also stated, “Schemata are created through experience with people, objects, and events in the world” (p. 4).

The role of schema theory, as per Adams and Collins (1979), is “to specify the interface between the reader and the text—to specify how the reader’s prior knowledge interacts with and shapes the information on the page and to specify how that knowledge must be organized to support interaction” (p. 3). In other words, “the text itself does not carry complete meaning, it only provides direction and clues for readers to retrieve or reconstruct meaning from their previously acquired knowledge” (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983, p. 556), and this is highly attributed to the vocabularies in every person. For example, when we frequently visit places, such as restaurants or grocery stores, we begin to form background information about our experiences to develop a general idea, or a concept of expectations of what we will encounter while visiting such places (Ajideh, 2003).

Ajideh (2003) added that “this is useful, because if someone tells you a story about a certain food they ate in a restaurant or a special event that occurred in a restaurant, they don’t have to provide all of the details about being seated, giving their order to the server, leaving a tip at the end, etc., because your schema for the restaurant experience can fill in these missing details” (p. 4). Schemata are comprised of organized background knowledge that leads us to expect or predict characteristics in our interpretation of something being read and/or experienced (Ajideh, 2003), hence the connections of vocabulary knowledge to better comprehend text. Bartlett (1932) believed that our memory of discourse was not based on straight reproductions, but was constructive.

Carrell (1984) divided schemata into three components: (a) *linguistic schema* that “refers to the readers’ existing language knowledge about phonemes, vocabulary, and grammar” (Yi & Zhang, 2006, p. 2); (b) *formal schema* that “refers to the readers’ background knowledge on the features and organizational patterns of various writing styles” (Yi & Zhang, 2006, p. 2), and (c) *content schema* that “refers to the readers’ background knowledge of the content area of a text” (Yi & Zhang, 2006, p. 2). Carrell and Floyd (1987) maintained that an ESL teacher is a form of conduit that must provide the student with the appropriate schemata he or she is lacking and must also teach the student how to build bridges between existing knowledge and new knowledge in order to comprehend text being read.

In addition, a number of organized pre-reading approaches such as prediction and inference have been proposed in the literature for facilitating reading through activation of background knowledge and the schema process (Carrell & Floyd, 1987). Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) revealed that when specific vocabulary from academic subject areas was selected as the focus of instruction, thus building background knowledge, the result was a 33% increase in comprehension.

Furthermore, as cultural factors are becoming more relevant in the delivery of instruction for ELLs another type of schema identified as *cultural schema* has emerged. Yi and Zhang (2006) concluded that this is so because the schemata presented is also culture-specific where “the meaning the reader constructs may not be in the text at all, but in the reader’s mind” (p. 2). Moreover, readers from different cultural backgrounds

interpret different perspectives when they are asked to recall the text because of the background knowledge they possess from their culture (Carrell, 1984).

Schemata may be viewed as flexible in that it undergoes a cyclic process of vocabulary knowledge within that consistently changes through information that is stored in one's memory and provides knowledge when needed in the reading process with the least amount of effort to comprehend. This, in turn, assisted me in identifying if teachers applied this theory to strategically instruct vocabulary through effective strategies for ELLs during the classroom observations performed.

The teacher interviews also allowed for a different perspective of this study because research today usually focuses on what should be included in the instruction of ELLs, why we need to teach them and how we need to teach them (Graves, 2009; Nieto, 2000). However, we are lacking the insider perspective of people going through the process—that is, individuals telling their own stories as they are lived in their classrooms and altogether in their lives (Gay, 2000). This perspective will come from our teachers of ELLs.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are offered for terms used for the purpose of this study:

Claymation – Getting students motivated and engaged in the learning process is probably the number one reason to try Claymation. The content of the animation might require students to create an advertisement for a product, rewrite existing stories with new characters, locations, or endings, or offer a new solution to an existing problem. Claymation is a hands-on activity that engages students, especially kinesthetic learners.

Working with clay characters and models allows students to explore abstract concepts in a tangible way. Creating Claymations helps students build writing, planning, organizing, and teamwork skills (Kolk, 2011).

Dr. Jean's Affirmations – Cheers, with hand gestures and movements, are created to motivate students for doing a good job and/or answering correctly (e.g., *firecracker cheer*-wiggle your fingers around and down like the sparkles coming from a firecracker, *cowboy cheer*- put one finger in the air, circle it like a lasso, and say, “Ye-haw!”, etc. (Herrera, Kavimandan & Holmes, 2011).

Effective Vocabulary Instruction – Vocabulary instruction for ELLs should be a part of a robust literacy instruction that includes an explicit code instruction of words, comprehension instruction, balanced language-rich instruction to increase oral vocabulary and academic vocabulary, and an additive literacy instruction that supports the transfer of learning from a student's first language (L1) to the student's second language (L2) (Manyak, 2007).

ELLs – English language learners have sufficient difficulty speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language and have difficulties that may deny such individuals the opportunity to learn successfully in classrooms where the language of instruction is in English. In addition, an individual may not participate fully in our society due to one or more of the following reasons: (a) was not born in the U.S. or whose native language is a language other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; (b) is a Native American or Alaska Native or who is a native resident of the Outlying Areas and comes from an environment

where a language other than English has had a significant impact on such individual's level of English language proficiency; or (c) is migratory and whose native language is other than English and comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant (Public Law 103-382, sec. 7501 as cited in Rhodes et al., 2005, pp. 1-2).

Foldables – Foldables are three-dimensional, interactive organizers that allow students to organize, remember, review, and learn vocabulary words and their meaning in a more explicit manner. The foldable strategy supports teachers in providing an extended focus on academic vocabulary development throughout the lesson (Herrera et al., 2011).

Frayer Model – The Frayer Model is a technique that requires students to define target vocabulary and apply their knowledge by generating examples and non-examples, provide characteristics, and draw a picture to illustrate the meaning of the word (Frayer, Frederick, & Klausmeier, 1969).

Highly Effective Strategies – These are strategies that teachers implement in order to challenge and engage all students the service, by adapting the required curriculum, resources, and standards in order to meet students' needs and interests (Routman, 2012).

NCLB of 2001 – The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandated that all students, in all subgroups, make continuous progress in all rigorous academic programs (Yell, 2006). The same law imposed required fiscal and corrective actions on those schools and districts that did not meet standards for their minority students (Hardman & Dawson, 2008).

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) – PLCs are created by groups of teachers and administrators who come together in order to focus on teaching and learning (DuFour, 2004; Zepeda, 2008).

Sheltered Instruction Strategies – These are instructional approaches designed to provide grade-level academic content in areas such as social studies, mathematics, and science accessible for ELLs by incorporating specialized strategies and techniques that accommodate the second-language acquisition process (Genesee, 1999).

STAAR – State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness.

TAKS – Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills.

TEA – Texas Education Agency.

Tier I Campus – A Tier I Campus is a local district scale that identifies campuses that consistently are able to demonstrate success for all learners in the state-mandated assessments.

Tier II Campus – A Tier II Campus is a local district scale that identifies campuses that barely meet the minimum state-mandated assessments for reading, and are under strict monitoring during each district benchmark with monthly central office visits.

Vocabulary – Vocabulary is an essential component of reading, and it is important to develop in order to achieve the comprehension of text (Lehr et al., 2004).

Organization of the Study

The research work was written and divided into four further chapters following the completion of this introductory chapter. Initially, a comprehensive review of the literature took place, providing the researcher with the current level of knowledge

surrounding the significant increase of ELLs in the United States and the need to better educate them. The literature review focused on the identification of key factors for providing ELLs with instruction to build vocabulary, the programs available for ELLs, the relationship of vocabulary knowledge and reading performance for ELLs, and even local data of reading achievement gaps between ELLs and native English speakers.

Following this, the research methodology is provided in Chapter III, with a description research design for the study. Choices were justified and supported with claims from the literature, helping to acknowledge that the study selected an appropriate methodology from which to gain the data. Chapter IV focuses on presenting the raw data and the interpretation of the triangulation in the research. It also presents the perspectives of the teachers about their empowerment toward educational decisions, frustrations, professional development altogether, vocabulary instructional procedures being implemented, and their familiarity with culturally responsive teaching. In addition, this chapter presents the main findings through responses to the three research questions and the emergent themes. The final chapter presents constructing meaning through discussions within the research questions. Chapter V also presents conclusions from the study as well as implications for further research, implications for practice, and the final recommendations for future studies of ELLs in the same research field of effective vocabulary instruction.

Summary

The study explored why research-based vocabulary instruction is a reason for the success on the STAAR reading assessment of two acceptable (previously identified as

exemplary by TEA) schools, in a U.S.-Mexico border community and their consistent scores from subgroups, as well as their total population. This was presented by focusing on the identification of research-based strategies for vocabulary instruction in the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades and how frequently effective vocabulary strategies are being implemented in these high-achieving schools, in order to attain reading success for all. For comparison purposes, a lower achieving school, as identified by the TEA, was also observed in the same grade levels to identify any vocabulary research-based strategies being implemented and the frequency with which these strategies are being implemented.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Many factors exist for providing ELLs with instruction to build vocabulary, but none is more important than the contribution of vocabulary knowledge to reading comprehension (Boulware-Gooden et al., 2007; Lehr et al., 2004). According to Cummins (2003), it takes between one and two years for ELLs to master conversational English, but at least five to seven years to become proficient in academic (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) English. Because ELLs master conversational English before they master academic English, teachers assume very often that ELLs are more fluent in English than they actually are. This review examined programs available for ELL students, the stages of second language acquisition, the importance of vocabulary knowledge, effective vocabulary programs, theory, culturally responsive teaching, and features of effective vocabulary instruction.

Programs Available for ELL Students

An array of bilingual education programs have been implemented across the United States in the past decades. In addition, bilingual education programs take many forms, but two goals are common to all: (a) to teach students the English language and (b) to provide instruction of the core curriculum in their home language while the students are learning the English language and more importantly proficiency in this

language (Barcroft, 2004; Lessow-Hurley, 2000). The following are brief descriptions of several of the most popular types of bilingual education programs.

Transitional Bilingual Education

These programs offer instruction in the primary language (non-English) for one to three years. The purpose is to build a foundation in literacy and academic content that will facilitate English language as well as academic development as students acquire English (Gersten & Woodward, 1995; Lugo-Neris et al., 2010). The goal of this program is to develop English language proficiency as quickly as possible and thus transition from their native tongues (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). There are two different kinds of programs: (a) early transition and (b) late transition programs. These programs focus on helping students acquire English proficiency required to succeed in an English-only mainstream classroom. Furthermore, early transitional programs teach ELLs in their first language during kindergarten and first grade. The transition to English occurs in 2nd and 3rd grades. Late transition programs lengthen instruction in the ELLs' native language through elementary school and begin transitioning to English in late elementary and early middle school (Krashen, Long, & Scarcella, 1979; Ramirez, Yuen, & Ramey, 1991; Roberts, 2005; Walsh, 2009; Wood et al., 2004).

Maintenance Bilingual Education

In this model, instruction is delivered in English and the minority language beginning in elementary school and often lasting into middle and high school. As the name implies, the goal of this type of program is to help language minority students develop and maintain their primary language, as well as become fully proficient in both

oral and written English (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005; Wood et al., 2004). The goals of maintenance bilingual programs are to promote bilingualism, bi-literacy, and pluralism. Languages other than English are seen as resources. Because it promotes the development of two languages, the outcome is additive bilingualism that is associated with positive cognitive benefits (Cummins, 1981).

Immersion Education

Unlike the American “immersion” model, in which students are “immersed” in English medium classes, the first bilingual immersion programs were developed in Canada for different purposes. The goal of these programs was to teach a second language, to language-majority students (Taylor, 1992). Students in these programs received instruction in their second language (e.g., Spanish) to develop second language proficiency while learning academic content.

Secondly, these programs focused on proficiency in both the native language and the second language. Special pedagogical techniques are used in these classrooms to help students understand, learn, and participate in the new language (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005; Wood et al., 2004). The success of these programs has been extensively studied and evaluated by the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (Genesee, 1987; Swain & Lapkin, 1989).

Two-Way Immersion Programs

These programs, also called developmental bilingual education, or dual programs, were created to serve both language majority and language minority students. Equal numbers of native speakers of English and language minority speakers are

grouped together in the same classrooms. In the early grades, instruction is delivered in the non-English language. This procedure provides second language development for English speakers as well as intensive primary language development for native speakers of the minority language (Christian, 1994; Ovando & Collier, 1985; Vitale & Romance, 2008). Instruction in English begins with about 20 minutes a day in kindergarten. Gradually, English is increased as students move up in grades until approximately equal time is given for both languages (Graves, 2009; Reynolds, Dale, & Moore, 1989; Silverman, 2007). Because of this type of program, both groups develop and maintain their home languages. The effects of the two-way program have been evaluated throughout the United States with positive results (Lindholm, 1990; Lindholm & Gavlek, 1994; Peregoy, 1991; Peregoy & Boyle, 2005; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Furthermore, Thomas and Collier (2002) stated that dual language education is the only model that allows English learners to fully close the achievement gap and at times even outperform their native English-speaking classmates on standardized tests.

It must be noted, however, that bilingual education programs serve only a small percentage of eligible students across the United States (Peregoy & Boyle, 2005). Much more commonly, students who arrive in this country are placed in educational settings in which the ultimate goal is for students to learn English, and very limited attention is given to the students' home language.

Teachers are one of the key components of these programs because they are responsible for providing the necessary and most effective instruction to their students. Therefore, investigating their knowledge about the programs in which they are

participating appears to be of the utmost importance and their knowledge about language acquisition for these students is also very important. “Teachers who value students as individuals with unique capabilities, are aware that language, be it spoken, written, or non-verbal, is a form of transaction that has a tremendous power in the learning-teaching process” (Carrasquillo & Rodriguez, 2002, p. 13). Understanding the stages of second language acquisition for ELLs is a critical component for teachers to provide the support needed for these students.

The Stages of Second Language Acquisition

Effective instruction exists in many forms and varieties mainly because it is important that students’ conceptions of learning go beyond the narrow view that they are simply acquiring a discrete piece of knowledge or a skill (Posner & Rudnitsky, 2001). Furthermore, students learning a second language develop through five predictable stages: (a) Preproduction, (b) Early Production, (c) Speech Emergence, (d) Intermediate Fluency, and (e) Advanced Fluency (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). The following defines each stage and the characteristics of ELLs while in that particular level.

Preproduction Stage

Students at this stage have from 0 to 6 months of exposure to English and are just beginning to learn the English language. Characteristics in class from these ELLs include shyness, with minimal comprehension, and mainly as listeners (Hill & Bjork, 2008; Krashen & Terrell, 1983). Many teachers mistakenly push these students to speak English before they are ready. For most ELLs at this level, it is very important for them to have time to listen and absorb the language before they are required to speak it. This

is sometimes referred to as the “Silent Period” (Asher, 2000; Krashen, 1985). As they move through this level, their vocabulary includes approximately 500 receptive words (words they can understand but do not implement), and they are beginning to develop what theorist Cummins (1979) described as the Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), which is language used for social interaction and communication. At this level, the teacher should be doing about 90% or more of the talking by prompting with “Show me...”; “Circle the...”; “Where is...?,” and “Who has...?” (Hill & Bjork, 2008).

Early Production Stage

At this level, students have had anywhere from six months to a year of English. They can now begin to produce some language, in the form of 1 to 2 word responses along with the same type of non-verbal responses that they depended on in level 1. Kamil and Hiebert (2005) affirmed that about 1,000 words form their receptive vocabulary, and as at any other level, about 10% of their vocabulary is expressive (words they regularly use). Furthermore, ELLs have limited comprehension, use key words and familiar phrases, and implement present-tense verbs as well (Hill & Bjork, 2008). Teachers must be careful to ask students questions that are appropriate for their level and to use simplified language, avoiding idioms and uncommon vocabulary. At this level the teacher should use “yes/no questions”; “either/or questions”; “who...?”; “what...?”; and “how many...?” (Hill & Bjork, 2008).

Moreover, in small group and paired activities, ELLs have greater opportunities to practice speaking (each student can take turns speaking versus having the teacher ask the class a question and only one student responds), and both partners can negotiate

meaning. Negotiation of meaning will not be achieved unless ELLs can participate in conversation, and research has shown that the focus on accurately conveying meaning through two-way negotiation is a very crucial condition for language development (Kessler, 1991; Lugo-Neris et al., 2010; Slavin, 1995). Once students have developed rudimentary vocabulary and syntax in English, their progress begins to expand rapidly (Anglin, Miller, & Wakefield, 1993; Walsh, 2009).

Speech Emergence Stage

At this point, somewhere between one and three years of exposure to English, ELL students' development of proficiency increases. They use phrases and sentences, and their receptive vocabulary grows to nearly 7,000 words. Furthermore, ELLs have good comprehension, can produce simple sentences, will make grammar and pronunciation errors and frequently misunderstand jokes and idioms (Hill & Bjork, 2008). Questions they are now able to answer include "how" and "why," which require phrase or short-sentence answers.

ELLs at the Speech Emergence stage can participate in a variety of teaching strategies. General student-centered practices such as scaffolding and expansion, poetry, songs, chants, prediction, comparing/contrasting, describing, cooperative learning, problem solving, charting, and graphing are appropriate for ELLs, but the classroom teacher must remember to provide them with additional support (Cummins, 1982).

Intermediate Fluency Stage

A shift occurs at this level, after about 3 to 5 years of exposure to English because ELLs begin to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency in English

which Cummins (1979) described as the ability to understand and use English for academic purposes, through texts and discourse. Having mastered the knowledge and skills required for social language (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills), ELLs have accumulated approximately 12,000 receptive words (Cummins, 1979). They have gone beyond speaking in phrases and simple sentences to being able to engage in extended discourse. They can answer complex questions that require them to synthesize and evaluate information because they possess adequate academic language proficiency and comprehension (Blachowicz, Fisher, Ogle, Watts-Taffe, 2006; Hill & Bjork, 2008). Even though it may seem that ELLs are able to perform the same activities as native speakers, they continue to need special support until their cognitive academic language and abilities in English are fully developed (Cummins, 1979).

In addition, cultural and linguistic biases are a factor in assessing ELL students at all levels of proficiency. If the ability to compare and contrast political systems is measured by a test question that requires a grammatically correct essay response, then the objective is not truly being assessed. The important point to remember is that students at this level are still in the process of learning academic English, and when they experience difficulty or fail to achieve at minimum levels, they still require language support (Cummins, 1979; Hill & Bjork, 2008; Grognet, Jameson, Franco, & Derrick-Mescua, 2000).

Advanced Fluency Stage

It takes ELLs from 5 to 7 years to achieve cognitive academic language proficiency in a second language (Collier, 1995; Thomas & Collier, 2002). A student at

this stage will be near-native in their ability to perform in content area learning and in speech (Gronnet et al., 2000; Hill & Bjork, 2008). Furthermore, the majority of ELLs at this stage have been exited from ESL and other language support programs. Although they are able to retell a story, ELLs will need continued support from classroom teachers, especially in content areas such as social studies and in language arts.

At every stage, whenever communication breaks down, the teacher should employ the same strategies as those used in the beginning stages, such as showing a picture, consulting a bilingual dictionary, gesturing, etc., in order to effectively assist ELLs (Cummins, 1979). Furthermore, the teacher should focus on the component of vocabulary to build a stronger knowledge base of understanding for all students.

The Relationship of Vocabulary Knowledge and Reading Performance for ELLs

Armbruster (2010) described vocabulary as the words one must know in order to communicate clearly and effectively. In general, vocabulary can be divided into two components: oral vocabulary and reading vocabulary. Oral vocabulary refers to words we use in speaking or recognize in listening; reading vocabulary as words we recognize or use in print (Armbruster, 2010). Ever since the 1980s, it has been estimated that there is a difference of about 4,500 and 5,400 vocabulary words for low-achieving versus high-achieving students (Marzano, 2009). Through the years, estimates of student vocabulary size have varied. Depending on how the concern was investigated, early vocabulary researchers reported figures ranging from 2,500 to 26,000 words in the vocabularies of first grade students and from 19,000 to 200,000 words for college graduate students (Beck & McKeown, 1991) not specifying monolingual or bilingual

students. Researchers have concluded that students add approximately 2,000 to 3,500 words yearly to their reading vocabularies (Anderson & Nagy, 1992; Anglin et al., 1993; Beck & McKeown, 1991; Hiebert, 2005; White, Graves, & Slater, 1990).

Nonetheless, many teachers assumed that teaching more, or a higher number of words, was best and at times combined vocabulary words with spelling words thinking that this was indeed an effective strategy. Reviews of classroom intervention studies have suggested that no more than 8 to 10 vocabulary words should be taught each week; this means that no more than approximately 400 words could be taught in a year (Stahl & Fairbanks, 1986). What is also evident is that there is a major difference in the vocabularies of low-achieving versus high-achieving students on reading achievement assessments. Data collected back in 1941 indicated that there was roughly a 6,000-word gap between students at the 25th and 50th percentiles on reading achievement tests in grades 4-12 (Marzano, 2009).

In addition to learning the importance about vocabulary development, educators should also attend to instructional approaches or effective instruction that specifically facilitates reading abilities in students who are dealing with two languages. For these reasons, teachers must be equipped with the tools to teach vocabulary.

What Constitutes an Effective Vocabulary Program?

According to Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, and Yamaguchi (2000), the methods that teachers normally use to teach vocabulary, especially in the upper elementary and secondary schools, tend not to facilitate learning in reading comprehension, but rather make it more difficult for ELLs to understand. Sole reliance on oral instruction through

lectures makes understanding information difficult for ELLs. Paper-and-pencil tasks such as worksheets that do not provide learning scaffolds for students also may be challenging. Textbook features intended to assist student understanding may have the opposite result for students who do not know how to use text features such as bolded words, headings, sidebars, and graphs (Graves, 2009; Tharp et al., 2000). Many ELLs have difficulty tracking the flow of information on cluttered pages. Furthermore, students who arrive in the United States beyond the initial age for literacy instruction and are not literate in their native language find that teachers are underprepared to teach them the basic literacy skills (Fillmore & Snow, 2002; Rueda & Garcia, 2001).

It is important to keep in mind that ELLs “have special needs that must be met with pinpointed strategies that target language so that they can understand the content being taught” (Hansen, 2006, p. 23). Teachers must recognize the special needs of ELLs and teach with those special needs in mind so that they can be met. Additionally, teachers must not assume that vocabulary is known, but rather, must provide daily vocabulary instruction in academic English that begins early and across all content areas (Gersten et al., 2007; Spencer & Guillaume, 2006). If vocabulary instruction in academic English is implemented in all content areas and initiated in the early grades, it makes sense that ELLs will more easily acquire the academic English that they need to be successful in school.

One direction that educators have taken to accommodate the need for teaching more academic content to ELLs while they are still learning English has been to incorporate more *sheltered instruction* (SI), or *specially designed academic instruction*

in English (SDAIE, as it is called in California), in their educational programs. SI is an instructional approach that makes grade-level academic content in areas such as social studies, mathematics, and science accessible for ELLs by incorporating specialized strategies and procedures that accommodate the second-language acquisition process (Genesee, 1999). SI teachers use the regular core curriculum and modify their teaching to make the content understandable for ELLs while promoting their English language development.

Some of the techniques that characterize SI include slower speech and clear enunciation, use of visuals and demonstrations, scaffolded instruction, targeted vocabulary development, connections to student experiences, student-to-student interaction, adaptation of materials, and use of supplementary materials for the English language development (Addison, 1988; Echevarria, 1995; Echevarria & Graves, 2003; Genesee, 1999; Kauffman, Sheppard, Burkart, Peyton, & Short, 1995; Short, 1991; Vogt, 2000). Such strategies for content-area teachers are promoted by school districts, teacher training programs, and the literature (Crawford, 2003); with the ever-growing number of ELLs in U.S. schools, all teachers need to be aware of these instructional approaches for content classes.

Although most educators agree on these features as being important in SI for ELLs, there has not been an explicit model for effectively delivering sheltered lessons or many investigations in which researchers measure what constitutes an effective sheltered lesson (August & Hakuta, 1997). As a result, SI has been implemented unevenly across districts and schools (Sheppard, 1995). Due to this universal lack of implementation, it is

important to keep in mind the goal of vocabulary instruction, which is for students to “develop an understanding of word meaning to the point where they can use these and related words in their communication and as a basis for further learning” (Gersten et al., 2007, p. 13). Furthermore, to accomplish this goal, vocabulary instruction for ELLs should be a part of robust literacy instruction that includes explicit core instruction, comprehension instruction, balanced language-rich instruction to increase oral vocabulary and academic vocabulary, socio-culturally informed instruction, and additive literacy instruction that supports the transfer of learning from a student’s first language (L1) to the student’s second language (L2) (Manyak, 2007).

A balanced approach to vocabulary will include explicit, implicit, and strategy instruction. *Explicit instruction* will teach students the definitions of words (Armbruster, 2010) in student friendly language (Gersten et al., 2007; Graves, 2009). When using explicit instruction to teach vocabulary, teachers have to remember to make sure the definitions are understandable to ELLs. If the definitions use language that is too difficult, then teachers will have to teach the vocabulary in the definitions as well as the target words.

Implicit instruction will teach ELLs to read and learn through the context in which an unknown word is surrounded (Armbruster, 2010). Within text, there are clues for the reader that will assist them with the meaning of any of the unknown words. ELLs need to be taught to use clues that are implicit in the text to solve problems in comprehension due to unknown vocabulary (Carlo et al., 2004; Greenwood & Flanigan, 2007). As reported by Husty and Jackson (2008), there is increased vocabulary

development when vocabulary instruction is context-based. Context helps ELLs to see relationships between known and unknown vocabulary words. Those relationships between words give ELLs more information than a definition alone for vocabulary development (Graves, 2009).

Strategy instruction needs to be taught so that ELLs learn to link their background knowledge to new concepts for meaningful associations (McKeown, Beck, & Blake, 2009) and have strategies that they can use to successfully resolve problems in comprehension due to lack of vocabulary (Pang & Kamil, 2004). When students make meaningful associations, they are able to place new vocabulary into categories or their schema (Ajideh, 2003) with known vocabulary making it easier to implement and comprehend.

Moreover, when vocabulary instruction includes explicit, implicit, and strategy instruction, ELLs are repeatedly exposed to the target vocabulary in a variety of contexts and increase their individual vocabulary development (Gersten et al., 2007; Husty & Jackson, 2008). It is very important that ELLs encounter target words multiple times so that these words are added to the students' repertoire of known vocabulary. When multiple encounters are combined with direct teaching of the words, both ELL students and their English-speaking peers, have increased performance in academics altogether (Husty & Jackson, 2008).

The underachievement of ELLs on state and national assessments indicates that for school success, teachers must do more than simply implement a few strategies from ESL methodologies, such as showing visuals or slowing down the rate of speech. Those

strategies may help students access the content concepts, but without systematic language development, students never develop the requisite academic literacy skills needed for achieving success in mainstream classes, for meeting content standards, or for passing standardized assessments locally and nationally (Munson, Kurtz, & Windsor, 2005).

Features of Explicit and Effective Vocabulary Instruction

For ELLs to succeed in school, they must master not only English vocabulary and grammar, but also the way that English is used in academic subjects, especially the subject of reading. “Academic English” includes semantic and syntactic knowledge, along with functional language use (Short, 2002). For example, students who use English must be able to (a) read and understand expository prose, such as that found in textbooks; (b) write persuasively; (c) argue points of view; and (d) take notes from teacher lectures (Short, 2002). Those students must also be able to articulate their thinking skills in English such as make hypotheses and predictions, articulate analyses, draw conclusions, and more (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). More importantly, educators must understand that there is a difference in teaching English as a second language and in teaching in the English language. They must also understand that vocabulary must be taught explicitly and effectively (Graves, 2009).

“In the quest to maximize students’ academic growth, one of the best tools available to educators is explicit instruction, a structured, systematic, and effective methodology for teaching academic skills” (Archer & Hughes, 2011, p. 1). Moreover, it is identified as explicit because of its precise and more direct approach to teaching which

includes both instructional design and delivery procedures (Archer & Hughes, 2011). In addition, Archer and Hughes (2011) described explicit instruction as that of being

characterized by a series of supports or scaffolds, whereby students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved. (p. 1)

An additional consideration for school success is the student behavior expectation to the cultural environment of the classroom, such as turn taking, following rules, and adhering to established routines (Echevarria et al., 2004). Erickson and Shultz (1991) reported that student comfort with the social participation structure of an academic task can vary according to culturally learned assumptions about appropriateness in communication and in social relationships, individual personality, and power relations in the classroom social system and in society at large. Many ELLs could, therefore, benefit from explicit guidance about expected appropriate classroom behaviors and interactional styles (Grognet et al., 2000). However, Bartolomé (1994) argued that teachers need to engage in culturally responsive teaching so their instruction is sensitive to, and builds upon, culturally different ways of learning, behaving, and using language.

In their various content classes, ELLs must pull together their emerging knowledge of the English language with the content knowledge they are studying to complete academic tasks associated with the content area (Short, 2002). They also must learn how to do those tasks, such as generate an outline, negotiate roles in cooperative-learning groups, and interpret charts and graphs. The combination of the three

knowledge bases—English, content topic, and the manner in which tasks should be accomplished—constitute the major components of academic literacy (Short, 2002).

In addition, “Showing learners how to construct meaning for unfamiliar words encountered during reading helps them develop strategies needed to monitor comprehension and increase their vocabularies” (Vacca & Vacca, 2007, p. 172). Word-learning strategies are especially important in the content area classrooms where each student is expected to read “like a scientist, historian, or mathematician” (Harmon, Wood, & Hedrick, 2008, p. 165). One of the most important strategies that will foster students’ independence in word learning is becoming skilled at using context clues to unlock the meaning of unknown words while reading (Graves, 2007, 2008, 2009).

Also in the importance to learning about vocabulary development, educators should also attend to instructional approaches or effective instruction that specifically facilitates literacy learning in students who are dealing with two languages. As previously mentioned, effective instruction must be implemented, and it is also important to remember that students’ conceptions of learning go beyond the narrow view that they are simply acquiring a discrete piece of knowledge or a skill (Posner & Rudnitsky, 2001); instead, keep in mind that they are learning for a lifetime. In spite of the type of ESL program implemented by a school, all teachers and administrators should consider and practice the following: different cultures must be represented in classrooms and instruction must be provided encouraging acceptance of native languages and cultures while facilitating the learning of English (Au, 2001; Mohr, 2004).

Equally important is enlisting support from the home because when the entire family is involved, cultural connections with the school are enhanced. In fact, if a student must struggle with functioning in two disparate cultures, that of the home and that of the school, the child's literacy learning may actually be impeded (Schmidt, 1995). Adger, Snow, and Christian (2002) suggested that every teacher should know the following about language: language behavior in school settings is influenced by culture; children of different cultures participate in classroom interaction in different ways; dialects are natural to all languages; the role of first language in literacy and the role of the first language in learning the second language are very important factors in learning. ELLs will be most successful when (a) they are explicitly included in a school's vision; (b) they are not isolated physically or by program; (c) they have equitable access to all resources; (d) their teachers receive constant staff development; and (e) they benefit from decisions of school reform that include linguistic and cultural needs of ELLs (Coady et al., 2003).

By studying eight schools with exemplary programs for ELL students, Minicucci and her colleagues (1995) identified several characteristics of successful instruction:

1. Innovative approaches encouraging students to become independent learners.
2. Use of cooperative learning (language and vocabulary development from peers).
3. Strong parental involvement.
4. Maximizing student engagement (implementing think, pair and share to define a vocabulary word instead of the dictionary).

5. A concentrated focus on the goal of learning the English language.

Overall, academic standards, benchmarks, and assessments are encountered by classroom teachers at every turn these days. These accountability measures are designed to ensure that all students in the United States, including those who speak languages other than English, meet state and national reading and writing standards (NCLB, 2001). Nonetheless, there is controversy about the quality of instruction that is being provided to the ELLs when it comes to meeting state and national reading and writing standards. Kohn (2000) stated that the quality of instruction declines most for those who have the least (e.g., low-socioeconomic students, Title I schools, Title III limited English proficient, etc.). “Standardized tests tend to measure the temporary acquisition of facts and skills, including the skill of test-taking itself, more than genuine understanding” (Kohn, 2000, p. 3).

Along the same lines, Kozol (1991) found that many poor children begin their young lives with an education that is far inferior to that of the children who grow up in wealthier communities. In fact, in his book of *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*, he wrote that these students are not given an equal opportunity from the start. In his own words, “Denial of ‘the means of competition’ is perhaps the single most consistent outcome of the education offered to poor children in the schools of our large cities” (Kozol, 1991, p. 83). Kozol (1991) examined how the unequal funding of schools relates to social class divisions, mishandling of funds, institutional and environmental racism, isolation and alienation of students and staff within poor schools, the physical decay of buildings, and the health conditions of students, therefore, not

reaching academic success. According to Teddlie and Reynolds (2000), the ability to instill in all students a belief that they can learn is vital to the success of effective low-socioeconomic schools. Implementing effective and motivational strategies such as systematic instruction and awarding prizes when goals are met is a practice associated with higher achievement among lower socioeconomic students (Heistad, 1997).

For the monolingual population, research has shown that vocabulary knowledge is closely related to reading achievement. However, the role of vocabulary has not been studied as extensively within the ELL population. It is important to look at vocabulary and the deficit of such to better understand reading achievement in the ELL population of this country and in our local schools.

Local Data of Reading Achievement Between ELLs and Native English Speakers

For the 2012-2013 school year under the Texas Education Agency, the following results indicate the scores for STAAR reading, only for grades 3rd, 4th, and 5th. Consider that the STAAR test has been under implementation for 2 years, and the passing standards for 3rd grade reading are at 50%, 4th grade reading at 52%, and 5th grade reading at 54%.

The following tables (Table 2.1, 2.2, 2.3) indicate the results for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade from the data provided by the Texas Education Agency for the 2012-2013 school year of the participating campuses in the study. Furthermore, the results point out the percentage of the students who met the designated passing standard as set by the state.

Third grade comparisons of Hispanic, White, and ELL students in the 3rd grade STAAR reading assessment are informative. The results indicate that out of 3,166

students tested in the 3rd grade, 3,121 are identified as Hispanic, 35 as White, and 2,133 as ELL. White students scored a 91% that indicates that 91% of these students met the passing standard of 50% for reading in the STAAR assessment. Seventy-seven percent of the Hispanic students and 38% of the ELLs in the district met the 50% passing standard for the STAAR reading test.

Table 2.1. Scores of 3rd Grade Reading STAAR Assessment for 2012-2013

3 rd grade	Number of Students Tested in District & Percent Meeting the 50% passing standard		Number of Students Tested in HA Campus 1 & Percent Meeting the 50% passing standard		Number of Students Tested in HA Campus 2 & Percent Meeting the 50% passing standard		Number of Students Tested in LA Campus & Percent Meeting the 50% passing standard	
ALL	3,166	77%	107	68%	117	97%	121	70%
AA	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hisp	3,121	77%	73	68%	113	97%	85	70%
White	35	91%	-	-	*	*	-	-
ECD	2,489	71%	75	70%	111	95%	81	67%
ELL	2,133	38%	47	44%	-	-	*	*

Note. Passing standard based on STAAR percent at Phase-in I Level II—50%. The Demographics include ALL (All students in 3rd grade), AA (African American), Hisp (Hispanics), White, ECD (Economically Disadvantaged), ELL (English language learner).

* Indicates results are masked due to small numbers to protect student confidentiality.

– Indicates zero observations recorded for this group.

High-Achieving Campus (HA), Low-Achieving Campus (LA).

For the High-Achieving Campus 1 (HA1), we see that 107 students were tested. Seventy-three (68%) of the Hispanic students and 47 (44%) of the ELLs at HA1 achieved the 50% passing standard. However, no White students were tested.

For High-Achieving Campus 2 (HA2), we see 117 students were tested and 97% met the passing standard (50%). One hundred and thirteen (97%) of the Hispanic students at HA2 achieved the 50% passing standard. White students' data could not be disclosed due to the small number of students who passed and to protect student

confidentiality. In addition, for the ELLs, zero observations were recorded; this means that this campus reported no ELLs enrolled in the 3rd grade (Texas Education Agency, 2012-2013).

For the Low-Achieving Campus (LA), the results indicate that 121 students were tested and that 85 (70%) of the students met the 50% passing standard. These 85 students were identified as Hispanic. For the White student population, zero observations were recorded; this means that this campus had no White students enrolled in the 3rd grade. Data for the ELLs could not be disclosed due to the small number of students who met the 50% passing standard and to protect student confidentiality (Texas Education Agency, 2012-2013).

The district results indicate that the 91% of the White students achieved the 50% passing standard, which is higher than the passing rate for ALL students (77%), Hispanic students (77%), and ELL students (38%). It is important to keep in mind that as 3rd graders, this is the first year that these students participated in the STAAR reading assessment. Furthermore, this is also the second year of implementation for this state-mandated assessment; hence, the Phase-In passing standards (50% - 3rd grade, 52% - 4th grade, and 54% - 5th grade).

The previous state assessment was the TAKS test; it is evident that the STAAR assessment is more rigorous. Next are the scores for the 4th grade reading STAAR assessment for the same school year.

Table 2.2. Scores of 4th Grade Reading STAAR Assessment for 2012-2013

4 th grade	Number of Students Tested in District & Percent Meeting the 52% passing standard		Number of Students Tested in HA Campus 1 & Percent Meeting the 52% passing standard		Number of Students Tested in HA Campus 2 & Percent Meeting the 52% passing standard		Number of Students Tested in LA Campus & Percent Meeting the 52% passing standard	
ALL	3,214	62%	96	74%	131	82%	119	43%
AA	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hisp	1,972	62%	71	74%	106	81%	86	43%
White	16	79%	-	-	*	*	-	-
ECD	1,390	56%	71	74%	100	76%	50	42%
ELL	1,685	41%	65	68%	93	71%	33	28%

Note. Passing standard based on STAAR percent at Phase-in I Level II—52% The Demographics include ALL (All students in 4th grade), AA (African American), Hisp (Hispanics), White, ECD (Economically Disadvantaged), ELL (English Language Learner).

* Indicates results are masked due to small numbers to protect student confidentiality.

– Indicates zero observations recorded for this group.

High-Achieving Campus (HA), Low-Achieving Campus (LA).

Evaluation of 4th grade students in the different subgroups of Hispanic, White, and ELLs for the STAAR reading assessment indicate that ELLs have lower passing percentages, and the data indicate those who actually met the 52% passing standard. For 4th grade, out of 3,214 students tested, 62% met the 52% passing standard. Additionally, 62% of Hispanic, 79% of White, and 41% of ELL students met the passing criterion. For the High-Achieving Campus 1 (HA1), 96 students in the 4th grade were tested. Hispanics at this HA1 were 71 and 74% met the 52% passing standard; no White students were represented; and 65 (68%) of the ELLs managed to reach the 52% standard set by TEA.

For High-Achieving Campus 2 (HA2), the data revealed that they tested 131 students and 107 (82%) achieved the passing standard (52%). Note that of the 106 Hispanics tested, 86 (81%) met the passing standard of 52%. However, for the White student population, the data could not be disclosed due to the small number of students

who passed and to ensure student confidentiality. Furthermore, 93 (71%) of the ELLs recorded attaining the passing standard.

For the Low-Achieving Campus (LA), the results indicate that 119 students were tested; however, only 51 (43%) met the passing standard of 52%. Eighty-six of these students were identified as Hispanic and 37 (43%) achieved a passing score. No White students were represented due to the small number tested; only 9 (28%) of the 33 ELLs tested met the passing standard for STAAR.

The district results for 4th grade indicate that the White students scored higher (79%) than ALL (62%), Hispanic (62%), Economically Disadvantaged (56%), and ELL students (41%), as well as the LA campus (42%). Table 2.3 represents the scores for the 5th grade students on the reading STAAR assessment for the same school year. The passing standard for 5th grade is set at 54% by the state.

According to Table 2.3, 3,308 students were tested and 2,249 (68%) met the 54% passing standard for 2012-2013 for 5th grade. Of the 24 Whites in 5th grade tested, 20 (82%) achieved the passing standard, thereby outscoring the 2,187 Hispanics (67%), and 612 (43%) ELLs, who also achieved this milestone. For High-Achieving Campus 1 (HA1), a total of 94 5th grade students were tested and 68 (72%) attained the state passing standard of 54%. Of the 68 Hispanics at this HA1 who were tested, 68 (72%) achieved the passing standard. However, no White students were represented due to the small number tested, and 31 (57%) of the 54 ELLs who took the STAAR exam reached the 54% passing standard.

Table 2.3. Scores of 5th Grade Reading STAAR Assessment for 2012-2013

5 th grade	Number of Students Tested in District & Percent Meeting the 54% passing standard		Number of Students Tested in HA Campus 1 & Percent Meeting the 54% passing standard		Number of Students Tested in HA Campus 2 & Percent Meeting the 54% passing standard		Number of Students Tested in LA Campus & Percent Meeting the 54% passing standard	
ALL	3,308	68%	94	72%	155	88%	132	63%
AA	*	*	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hisp	2,187	67%	68	72%	136	88%	83	63%
White	24	82%	-	-	*	*	-	-
ECD	1,634	63%	68	72%	124	80%	83	63%
ELL	612	43%	54	57%	104	67%	59	45%

Note. Passing standard based on STAAR percent at Phase-in I Level II—54%. The Demographics include ALL (All students in 5th grade), AA (African American), Hisp (Hispanics), White, ECD (Economically Disadvantaged), ELL (English Language Learner).

* Indicates results are masked due to small numbers to protect student confidentiality.

– Indicates zero observations recorded for this group.

High-Achieving Campus (HA), Low-Achieving Campus (LA).

For High-Achieving Campus 2 (HA2), the data show that they tested 155 students and that 136 (88%) met the passing standard. Additionally, of the 136 Hispanics who took the STAAR test 120, (88%) achieved the passing standard. Data regarding the passing rate for the White student population could not be used due to the small number of students who took the test and to protect student confidentiality. Furthermore, 70 (67%) of the 104 ELLs tested and attained the state passing standard of 54%. For the Low-Achieving Campus (LA), the results indicate that 132 students were tested and that 83 (63%) attained the passing standard. Also, of the 83 Hispanic students tested, 52 (63%) met the passing 54% of the passing criterion. No data for White students were reported due to the small number tested. Additionally, of the 59 ELLs who took the STAAR test, 45% attained the passing standard of 54%. In the district, results for 5th grade indicate once again that a greater proportion of the White students (82%) met the passing standard of 54%, while ALL students met it at 68%; furthermore, the Hispanic

students scored 67% and the ELL student population was the lowest with only 43% passing with the required standard.

It is important to keep in mind that the sum of the ALL students will not equal the sum of the other subgroups, as some of the students share demographic characteristics (e.g., ELL and ECD; Hispanic and ELL, etc.). In addition, it is imperative to note that the economically disadvantaged students portray a low passing percentage rate for the district and the LA campus in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades. Not surprisingly in this U.S.-Mexico border community, the English language learners and the Hispanics are scoring lower on standardized reading tests when compared to the White students just like the national educational outcomes previously mentioned (Abedi, 2002; August & Hakuta, 1997; Zehler et al., 2003).

With this context in mind and based on the subsequent needs of an effective vocabulary program to improve reading altogether, the following is a description of the importance of professional development needs for teaching vocabulary. Also included is a model of learning that will assist teachers in the effective vocabulary development for English language learners.

Professional Development Needs for Teaching Vocabulary

Professional development is the strategy schools and school districts use to ensure that educators continue to strengthen their practice throughout their career. In a report by the National Center for Education Statistics (2002), 42% of the teachers surveyed indicated that they had ELLs in their classroom, but only 12.5% of these teachers had received more than eight hours of professional development specifically

related to ELLs (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). The trends indicated that ongoing professional development would be necessary for the transformation of education in the twenty-first century for teachers and the students they serve (Strong, Fletcher, & Villar, 2004).

If professional development opportunities for teachers about features of effective instruction in the area of vocabulary were to be provided, then they would be able to provide all students with many opportunities to deepen their word knowledge base and thus enrich their speaking and reading vocabularies. Furthermore, the training would be implemented with the intent of observing and assessing the purpose and actions of these professionals to demonstrate increased academic achievement for ELLs in the area of vocabulary (Snow & Kim, 2007; Tallerico, 2005).

Creating Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) can also reinforce the importance of training needs for a campus (DuFour, 2004; Zepeda, 2008). PLCs are focused on learning whatever strategy is needed to enhance student achievement, e.g., the achievement of ELLs. Furthermore, PLCs are created by groups of teachers and administrators who come together in order to focus on teaching and learning (DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 2006; Richardson, 2005; Zepeda, 2008). Zepeda (2008) stated that there must be three major components in the culture of a campus in order to form a PLC.

First, there must be a transformation from a culture of teaching to a culture of learning. Secondly, there must be a shift in the work of teachers from isolation to collaboration with one another. The final shift must be a change in focus from input to outcomes, where evidence of student learning drives professional development practice

(Zepeda, 2008). Furthermore, DuFour (2004) identified three big ideas to guide the work of PLCs: A focus on learning, a culture of collaboration, and a focus on results. If the expectations are high and teachers are held accountable, then a model of culturally responsive teaching of vocabulary for ELLs should be implemented.

The Model of Culturally Responsive Teaching of Vocabulary for ELLs

Gay (2000) defined culturally responsive teaching as a means to address the cultural knowledge, prior knowledge experiences, and performance styles of diverse students in order to make learning more appropriate and effective for them, the main focus being to teach through the strengths of these students. Since ELLs have a language background other than English, it would be more effective to teach them vocabulary in their first language, especially while reading texts. In addition to using effective vocabulary instructional methods and materials, teachers should acquire cross-cultural communication skills and thus develop a clear understanding of their culturally and linguistically diverse students (Garcia & Dominguez, 1997). Researchers such as Hale (2001), Gay (2000), and Ladson-Billings (1994) stated that teachers who demonstrate culturally responsive pedagogy embrace the following practices:

1. Communicate high expectations—communication consists of positive relationships between the teacher and the school community, with an emphasis based upon respect for the student, his/her family, and a strong belief in the student's ability to learn.

2. Use active teaching methods—curriculum and instruction are designed to promote student engagement by requiring students' participation in the development of such.
3. Facilitate learning—the teacher's role is more of a mentor, guide, mediator, and consultant within an active learning environment.
4. Use positive perspectives on parents and families of culturally and linguistically diverse students—active communication and participation among students, parents, and community members about issues of major importance to them is evident.
5. Demonstrate cultural sensitivity—teachers are active participants in gathering knowledge about the cultures presented by their students.
6. Reshape the curriculum—the curriculum and instruction provided to diverse students are based on the students' interests and backgrounds.
7. Provide culturally mediated instruction—curriculum and instruction are characterized by the use of culturally mediated cognition, culturally appropriate social situations for learning, and culturally valued knowledge in the curriculum content.
8. Promote student controlled classroom discourse—students are provided with the opportunity to control some portion of the lesson, providing teachers with insight into the ways that speech and negotiations are implemented in the home and the community.

9. Include small group instruction and cooperative learning—instruction is organized around stress-free and student-controlled cooperative learning groups that can assist in the development of their academic language.

Culturally relevant literature should be implemented in order to improve vocabulary instruction and to avoid students falling into special education programs (Willis & Harris, 2000). In addition, the President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education Report (2002) found that 40% of the students identified are there because they were not taught how to read and not because of a cognitive issue. Culturally responsive teaching in reading instruction is that which promotes easy access to background knowledge and initiates academic success for those diverse learners (Gay, 2000). Freeman and Freeman (1994) stated that it is an effective strategy for students to be encouraged to use home language vocabulary when they are not able to find the appropriate English term. Also, it encourages teachers to adapt their instruction to meet the learning needs in all content areas of all students (Brown University, 2003).

Summary

In summary, it is possible to underline a number of key factors and findings that developed from this review of the empirical literature. Initially, the review of the literature helped to set the context for the bilingual programs available for ELLs and the stages of second language acquisition these students experience while learning the English language. The review highlighted the relationship of vocabulary knowledge and reading performance for ELLs and factors that constitute an effective vocabulary

program. Local data of reading achievement gaps between ELLs and native English speakers were also presented.

More recently, studies have been conducted focusing on the needs of professional development for teaching vocabulary, indicating that professional development would be necessary for the transformation of education in the twenty-first century for teachers and the students they serve. The model of culturally responsive teaching of vocabulary for ELLs was also discussed; it urges teachers to acquire cross-cultural practices to better understand the culturally and linguistically diversity of the students. It is clear that challenges remain with the education of ELLs, teaching them effectively to acquire the academic vocabulary necessary to achieve reading success and most importantly providing them with teachers who have the appropriate tools to service ELLs altogether. The International Reading Association (2001) pointed out that “the right of the child to choose to be bilingual, bicultural, and biliterate, or monolingual, monocultural, and monoliterate must be honored and respected” (p. 1).

For that reason, this literature review can serve as a guide for many educators servicing ELLs in their district, with an increased level of knowledge of how to effectively teach vocabulary. This knowledge will allow for increased levels of reliability and validity when discussing the findings from this most recent work.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study implemented qualitative research methods to explore the relationship between vocabulary instruction and the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR). The STAAR reading assessment results in two high-achieving elementary schools and one low-achieving elementary school were examined in order to answer the three research questions.

Research Questions

These questions guided my research:

1. What are the vocabulary instructional procedures identified from the classroom observations, the student artifacts, and the teacher interviews in the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?
2. Is there evidence of culturally responsive teaching among the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?
3. Are there differences and similarities among vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures evidenced from the teacher interviews in each of the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school? And if so, what are they?

This chapter addresses the following components of this study. The components are the descriptive case study as the research design, campus selection procedures, case

study justification, participants, data collection procedures, qualitative analysis procedures, limitations, and ethical considerations.

Descriptive Case Study

The research design of this qualitative study followed a descriptive case study approach. Shank (2006) stated that the incorporation of case study protocol into any research design process will potentially “bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader’s experience, or confirm what is known” (p. 127) about the challenges of what is being studied. The investigation identified vocabulary instructional strategies within unique elementary schools in one urban school district. The uniqueness of the cases selected for the study was not determined by school demographics only, but rather by the documented levels of success two of the schools achieved despite a high proportion of ELLs.

Also, a descriptive case study is a form of empirical social research, and it is a method that allows the researcher to study a real-life phenomenon within significant contextual conditions (Schram, 2006; Stake, 1995). The descriptive case study allowed the research to be more “focused on moving toward a better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a more general phenomenon” (Schram, 2006, p. 107). More importantly, this case study was conducted in order to identify vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures that high-achieving schools implemented and to thus be able to provide valuable information that could address the universal reading proficiency mandates of the NCLB Act of 2001 (Elliott & Thurlow, 2006; Hess & Petrilli, 2009).

Qualitative research involves the studied use of an array of empirical materials that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Creswell, 2007). In addition, researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings that people bring to them (Creswell, 2007).

I conducted a qualitative descriptive case study of three elementary schools in a U.S.-Mexico border community located in South Texas. For the purpose of this study, I implemented the previous TEA school ranking system of two elementary schools that were identified as exemplary and the third school as acceptable. The current TEA ranking system associated with the new State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR), presently only identifying campuses as acceptable or unacceptable (TEA, 2013), ranked all three schools as acceptable.

The rationale for including two high-achieving elementary schools and one low-achieving elementary school was to allow for comparisons between the two high-achieving schools to see if the same or similar vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures were being implemented in both, or whether these provided different instructional procedures and/or strategies when teaching vocabulary to ELLs. The low-achieving elementary school was included to allow for a comparison to see if this school was different in the implementation of vocabulary instruction and procedures from either or both of the high-achieving elementary schools since student demographics were similar among the three elementary schools selected.

As the principal researcher, I implemented a descriptive case study approach to examine the research problem, which provided an in depth understanding of the cases (Stake, 1995; Creswell, 2007). The descriptive case study focused on the following: (a) classroom observations (including the classroom environment), (b) student artifacts, and (c) the strategies and procedures used to teach vocabulary through teacher interviews. In addition, purposeful sampling was implemented and involved the “selection of individuals, and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem, and central phenomenon of the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). This sampling procedure led to the identification of practices in vocabulary instruction being implemented or not in the low-achieving and the high-achieving schools.

Campus Selection Procedures

The school district in this study is located in a U.S.-Mexico border community in South Texas, and it is an urban district where I have been employed for the past 16 years, thus my reason for selecting these elementary schools within the district, as participants for this study. From the associate superintendent for curriculum and instruction to campus personnel, I have established strong working relationships with many stakeholder groups built on trust, mutual respect, and belief in supporting learning at the district and campus levels.

The executive director for elementary education takes part in reviewing the scope and sequence for the elementary level, directs the curriculum and instruction elementary instructional coordinators, as well as evaluates the elementary principals. The executive

director visits campuses, observes instruction, provides guidance and support to principals, and assists the curriculum and instruction coordinators to determine and target instructional priorities for each elementary campus. She was an elementary principal in this district and has more than 10 years of administrative experience interacting with principals, staff members, and district level personnel. My strong professional relationship with the executive director for elementary curriculum and instruction provided me with a key stakeholder in purposefully selecting (Maxwell, 2005) participating elementary teachers who could supply in-depth information about effective vocabulary instruction and procedures for ELLs and complete the necessary district protocol for conducting research (see Appendix A).

I selected three schools in the same independent school district (ISD) because they fit the following criteria:

1. Based on a review of the Texas Education Agency accountability ratings for ISD schools, the three campuses were rated acceptable-met standard (TEA, 2013). Because the STAAR test is fairly new, the campuses were no longer rated as exemplary, recognized, academically acceptable, and academically unacceptable; the state is presently rating the campuses as either acceptable or unacceptable. My reason for selection based on the accountability criteria was to examine whether the nature of vocabulary instruction among the acceptable campuses (previously exemplary under the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills-TAKS administration) is the same or different from the nature of vocabulary instruction at the acceptable campus (previously acceptable under TAKS administration) or the low-achieving campus. The main reason

these two high-achieving schools were selected was because they appeared to be outliers in the data of the district with their consistent and successful state-mandated reading achievement scores. Although there are significant differences among the three participating campuses in the number of ELLs and economically disadvantaged students, HA1 has been able to maintain high scores in reading for state accountability regardless of demographics. The addition of the low-achieving campus provided for a comparison of the findings across all three schools. Interest in the third elementary school also came about because more information would be needed to identify professional development training on vocabulary development for the teachers, especially because this school had the highest number of ELLs identified (700 ELLs, which is 4.1% of the 16,839 ELLs district-wide).

2. The high-achieving campuses were also ranked as Tier I, according to the local district scale, and they consistently were able to demonstrate success for all learners on the state-mandated reading assessment. Currently, these are not the only acceptable campuses in the district; however, three years ago they were the only two exemplary campuses under TAKS. More importantly, these two high-achieving elementary schools were selected because they demonstrated continuous success over the last three years with subgroups, such as ELLs, to be eligible for participation in the study; they are also identified as Tier I at the district level. Tier I campuses, at the district level are those that met and surpassed the passing STAAR standard for 3rd grade reading at 50%, with all students at district level passing with a 50% or higher was at 77%; 4th grade reading state standard at 52%, with all students at district level passing with a 52%

or higher was at 62%; and for 5th grade the state reading standard at 54%, with all students at district level passing with a 54% or higher was at 68%. Additionally, both campuses were currently demonstrating reading success in the district's benchmark data by surpassing the STAAR standard. However, they are each led by a newly hired principal who has three or more years of experience as an assistant principal and believes strongly in effective vocabulary instruction for all learners, as stated during the principal interviews.

3. The low-achieving campus is one of the 26 campuses in the district that was part of the Tier II acceptable campuses in the district for the 2013-2014 school year. Tier II campuses are those that barely met the minimum STAAR standards for reading and are under strict monitoring during each district benchmark with monthly central office visits. This campus had a newly hired principal with prior experience as an assistant principal for five years. In addition, this individual was previously an assistant principal at one of the high-achieving schools in this study. Currently, this principal is working diligently with teachers, students, and parents to improve the academic achievement of this campus.

4. The school populations are similar with respect to ethnicity, socio-economic status, and especially the ELL population for HA1 and LA are very comparable as well.

a. High-Achieving Campus 1 (HA1) Total Student Enrollment 714

i. Hispanic Population (708 students campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade, comprise 1.6% of the 42,080 students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 99.1% at HA1.

- ii. White Population (5 White students campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade, make up 1.1% of the 439 students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 0.7% at HA1.
 - iii. Economically Disadvantaged (681 economically disadvantaged students campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade comprise 2.1% of the 31,626 of the students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 95.3% at HA1.
 - iv. ELLs (623 ELLs campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade, make up 3.6% of the 16,839 students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 87.2% at HA1.
 - v. Current Principal was a past administrator (assistant principal) at this campus. This is his first year as a principal at HA1. He has more than 10 years of experience and prior to being a campus administrator, he was working with the same district as an instructional coordinator.
- b. High-Achieving campus 2 (HA2) Total Student Enrollment 831
- i. Hispanic Population (811 students campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade, reflect 1.9% of the 42,080 students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 97.5% at HA2.
 - ii. White Population (15 White students campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade, comprise 3.4% of the 439 students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 1.8% at HA2.

- iii. Economically Disadvantaged (383 economically disadvantaged students campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade, make up 1.2% of the 31,626 of the students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 46% at HA2.
 - iv. ELLs (324 ELL students campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade, comprise 1.9% of the 16,839 students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 38.9% at HA2.
 - v. Current Principal was a past administrator (Literacy Coach) at HA1. This is her first year as a principal at HA2. She has more than 10 years of experience and prior to being a campus administrator, she was working with the same district as a Special Education instructional coordinator.
- c. Low-Achieving Campus (LA) Total Student Enrollment 870.
- i. Hispanic Population (869 students campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade, reflect 2.0% of the 42,080 students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 99.8% at LA.
 - ii. White Population (1 White student campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade, comprise .2% of the 439 students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 0.1% at LA.
 - iii. Economically Disadvantaged (829 economically disadvantaged students campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade, comprise 2.6% of

the 31,626 of the students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 95.2% at LA.

- iv. ELLs (700 ELL students campus-wide Early Childhood-5th grade, make up 4.1% of the 16,839 students district-wide Early Childhood-12th grade), 80.4% at LA.
- v. Current Principal was a past administrator (assistant principal) at HA1. This is her first year as a principal at LA. She has more than 5 years of experience and prior to being a campus administrator, she was a special education teacher and an educator in Monterrey, Nuevo Leon Mexico as well.

5. Although the HA1 and LA campuses share very similar demographics as far as the number of ELLs and the number of economically disadvantaged students, their state academic rankings of exemplary, recognized, and acceptable have never been comparable. It was important to bring in HA2 because this campus, as well as HA1, was able to maintain high academic success during the era of TAKS (ranked as exemplary for three or more years in a row), even with the differences in demographics and also in accordance with the present accountability measures of STAAR (ranked as acceptable).

The current principals at each of the three campuses are in their first year of principalship; however, they were all mentored by the same principal at one point. Therefore, all three principals were mentored by the same administrator throughout their administrative careers. I am excited to learn if this will be an important factor, once the themes and results are revealed. In addition, I have a strong working relationship with all

three principals that allowed for a more flexible agenda when creating the schedules to visit their teachers for interviews and classroom observations.

Because vocabulary acquisition is both cross-curricular and a challenge for the ELL population, it is directly related to academic reading performance and is identified as a focus area for this study (Buteau & True, 2009; Hoover & Patton, 2005; NRP, 2000; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009). Additionally, the data collection methodology in the form of classroom observations, collection of artifacts, and teacher interviews is explained in detail; this chapter also explains how the findings were processed and analyzed.

Process to Select Participants

Following the selection of schools, I met with the three campus principals from the participating schools to explain why their campus was selected and to inform them of how I would gather the relevant data if permission was granted. I also explained to the principals that a major component of my study was that of purposeful sampling that involved “selecting individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon of the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125).

I asked the principals to assist me in compiling background information on each faculty member (see Appendix B) after the consent from the principal was granted (see Appendix C). This background information included gender, ethnicity, current position at the campus, level of education, certifications, total number of years at present campus, total years of experience in education, and whether the teachers taught through a prescribed systematic approach, or if they are empowered to make educational decisions

within the curriculum. I then used the information provided by the principals during their interview and selected the six participants from each of the campuses, along with an alternate. I explained my rationale to the principals about alternates, as it is highly recommended in case a teacher is dismissed, out on sick leave, or not willing to participate in the study at any point.

The final selection included two teachers in each grade level (3rd through 5th) from each of the three campuses selected (18 teachers out of a possible 40) and one alternate from each campus (18 teachers and 3 alternates). The alternate was either from 3rd, 4th or 5th grade, but during the length of the study, none of the alternates were needed for participation.

Furthermore, I informed the principals that the teachers selected needed to be a true representation of the faculty average at their campus, not necessarily the “best” teachers, but “typical” teachers and those who met most of the above-mentioned criteria. Following are the tables of demographic data corresponding to each of the participating campuses.

High-Achieving Campus 1

The participating teachers from HA1 are six: five are females and one is a male (Table 3.1). They all hold a Bachelor’s degree and they are of Hispanic descent. Years of experience range from 3 years to 22 years; however, at the present campus, the years of experience range from 3 years to 6 years.

Table 3.1. Demographic Data of Participants from HA1

Participant and Grade level	Gender	Ethnicity	Education	Certification(s)	Total Years of Experience (YOE) and YOE at the Present Campus
Doris - 103 (a) 3 rd grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	EC-4 th Bilingual/Generalist	Total YOE 3 Present Campus 3
Jane - 103 (b) 3 rd grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	EC-4 th Bilingual/Generalist	Total YOE 3 Present Campus 3
Carla - 104 (b) 4 th grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	EC-4 th Bilingual/Generalist	Total YOE 4 Present Campus 4
Lizzy - 104 (b) 4 th grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	EC-4 th Bilingual Generalist	Total YOE 9 Present Campus 3
Hugo - 105 (a) 5 th grade teacher	Male	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	Bilingual/Generalist (1 st -5 th)	Total YOE 22 Present Campus 6
Clarissa - 105 (b) 5 th grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	Bilingual/Generalist (EC-6 th), GT	Total YOE 4 Present Campus 4

High-Achieving Campus 2

The participating teachers from HA2 are six: all are females (Table 3.2). They hold a Bachelor's degree and are of Hispanic descent. Years of experience range from 7 years to 21 years; however, at the present campus, the years of experience range from 7 to 17 years.

Table 3.2. Demographic Data of Participants from HA2

Participant and Grade level	Gender	Ethnicity	Education	Certification(s)	Total Years of Experience (YOE) and YOE at the Present Campus
Angelina- 303 (a) 3 rd grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	EC-4 th Bilingual/Generalist	Total YOE 7 Present Campus 7
Marissa- 303 (b) 3 rd grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	EC-4 th Bilingual/Generalist	Total YOE 8 Present Campus 8
Sylvia- 304 (a) 4 th grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	EC-4 th Bilingual/Generalist	Total YOE 10 Present Campus 10
Sonia- 304 (b) 4 th grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	Bilingual/ESL1-6 th Self-Contained 1-6 th	Total YOE 13 Present Campus 11
Aimee- 305 (a) 5 th grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	Bilingual/ESL1-8 th Self-Contained 1-8 th Reading 1-8 th	Total YOE 21 Present Campus 7
Nina- 305 (b) 5 th grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	Bilingual/ESL1-8 th Elem. Self-Contained 1-8 th	Total YOE 17 Present Campus 17

Low-Achieving Campus

The participating teachers from LA are six: four of the teachers are females and two are males (Table 3.3). The four females hold a Bachelor's degree and the two males hold a Master's degree; they are all of Hispanic descent. Years of experience range from 2 years to 14 years; however, at the present campus, the years of experience range from 2 to 10 years.

Table 3.3. Demographic Data of Participants from LA

Participant and Grade level	Gender	Ethnicity	Education	Certification(s)	Total Years of Experience (YOE) and Years of Experience at the Present Campus
Nancy- 503 (a) 3 rd grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	EC-8 th Bilingual, GT, ESL	Total YOE 14 Present Campus 10
Katrina- 503 (b) 3 rd grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	EC-4 th Bilingual/Gen., GT	Total YOE 2 Present Campus 2
Liza- 504 (a) 4 th grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	EC-4 th Bilingual/Generalist	Total YOE 5 Present Campus 5
Juan- 504 (b) 4 th grade teacher	Male	Hispanic	Masters Degree	EC-4 th Bilingual/Gen., GT, Mid-Management	Total YOE 9 Present Campus 8
Samuel- 505 (a) 5 th grade teacher	Male	Hispanic	Masters Degree	1 st -8 th Bilingual, ESL, Mid- Management	Total YOE 13 Present Campus 2
Melissa- 505 (b) 5 th grade teacher	Female	Hispanic	Bachelors Degree	1-8 th Bilingual, ESL	Total YOE 10 Present Campus 7

I also informed the principals and the teachers that the classroom observations performed as part of the study would in no way be considered as part of their yearly teacher evaluations, as these are confidential. Next, I explained the general nature of the study to the potential participants. I did not reference the observation tool and other details to avoid conflicts (such as intentionally practicing the strategies mentioned in the observation tool). I reviewed the consent form to stress confidentiality in all aspects and

informed them that there would be interviews with five questions after the classroom observations. It was also important to mention to the participants that after the interviews were transcribed, member-checks for validity and verification of responses would allow them to review and revise any of their responses to the interview questions (see Appendix C & Appendix D). To ensure confidentiality for the participants, I used a pseudonym for the interviews and implemented this coding system to refer to them (see Appendix E). All of the documentation acquired from the study (signed consent forms, classroom observations, teacher interviews, digital photographs of artifacts) remains under lock and key in my home address throughout the life of the study and as required by the IRB Protocol of the University.

Data Collection

“The data collection of the case study research is viewed typically as extensive, drawing on multiple sources of information, such as observations, interviews, documents, and audiovisual materials” (Creswell, 2007, p. 75). For purposes of this qualitative study, I conducted five unannounced classroom observations of each participant using the classroom observation tool (see Appendix G) targeting the implementation of effective vocabulary instruction for 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students through the mandated Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) also known as the standards. Furthermore, the TEKS standards in large part measure acquisition of vocabulary and knowledge of vocabulary as evidenced by the progress in every subject area, especially in reading (NRP, 2000). In addition, during the classroom observations, photographs of artifacts produced by the students were collected as a consequence of the

vocabulary instruction they received. Moreover, teacher interviews were conducted and the data collected were analyzed, as well.

Data Collection Procedures

Classroom Observations

As part of the investigation, the classroom observations were performed at different times of the day and on a different day of the week 90% of the time (schedules were provided by the campus principal). The content area being observed was also different, except when the grade level was departmentalized; no observations were performed during teachers' planning periods or the students' period for special services (e.g., physical education, library, or music). Two out of the three campuses were departmentalized (HA1 and LA) in the 5th grade, which involved 4 out of the 18 teachers. These arrangements allowed for the observation of vocabulary instructional procedures being implemented across the curriculum at these campuses for ELLs and the classroom environment available for learning.

Five classroom observations of each participating teacher in each school for a total of 30 observations for each of the three participating schools (90 observations across the 3 campuses) were conducted during the spring semester of 2014, during unannounced times over a period of three months, in order to record any features of vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures observed. Since vocabulary is a component that should be taught all day, every day across the disciplines, because "words are learned from context" (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2013 p. 4), a particular content-subject was not identified, but the length of each observation was 25 minutes

long. The Classroom Observation Tool was adapted from the Indiana University of Pennsylvania (Kinsella & Feldman, 2003); however, the features of a culturally responsive methodology as described by Gay (2000) were also included (see Appendix G).

This observation tool contained highly effective vocabulary instructional strategies identified by researchers. Among these highly effective strategies (HES) were (a) implementing a systemic approach (Spencer & Guillaume, 2006); (b) providing explicit instruction with modeling to facilitate making connections and activating background knowledge (Echeverria, Vogt, & Short, 2004; Kauffman et al., 1995; Short, 1991; Vogt, 2000); (c) providing students with opportunities to use the vocabulary words in context (Gersten et al., 2007); (d) checking for understanding (Greenwood & Flanigan, 2007); and (e) allowing students to speak in their Native language (Garcia, 1996; Manyak, 2007). These HES strategies were analyzed in two categories: the first one as HES 1-5, 7 that were teacher-centered behaviors observed, and the second category was 9-11, 13 that were student-centered behaviors observed. When teachers allow ELLs to speak in their native language, they provide these learners with opportunities to express themselves with no limitations and thus facilitates the learning of the English language (Au, 2001; Mohr, 2004).

In addition, this observation tool included three least effective instructional strategies for developing vocabulary that have been noted by researchers. These least effective strategies (LES) include (a) writing the words multiple times (Marzano, 2004), (b) looking for the meaning of the words with a dictionary (Marzano, 2004), and (c)

providing a list of vocabulary and spelling words to study for a test at the end of the week (Allen, 1997).

Both HES and LES were included in the Classroom Observation tool in order to document the vocabulary instructional strategies employed by the participating teachers at each of the three participating campuses (all classroom observations lasted 25 minutes). All of the participating teachers were observed for five classroom observations during the collection of data. The observations were preplanned with their daily schedules in mind. Furthermore, the classroom observations were also at different times of the day, during the different content areas being taught, in order to grasp a better understanding of the teacher's delivery of vocabulary instruction (Protheroe, 2009).

In addition, the culturally responsive teaching component was included in this classroom observation tool because the populations identified in this study were ELLs, who are diverse learners of other cultures and in order to gauge the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction being provided to them. Gay (2000) identified culturally responsive teaching as that which teachers use to promote learning among diverse learners by activating and engaging their background knowledge to deliver effective reading instruction. I also wanted to know if teachers were adapting their vocabulary instruction to facilitate vocabulary learning for ELLs in all of the content areas (Brown University, 2003).

Analysis of Artifacts

The collection of artifacts from students through digital photographs was also part of the data collection. Examples of these artifacts include graphic organizers,

foldables, webs, vocabulary activities, content specific posters, word walls, illustrations, and others. Spradley (1980) described artifacts as what people make and use; for that reason, when studying a culture, social setting, or phenomenon collecting and analyzing the artifacts produced and used by members of that social setting can foster further understanding (Silverman, 2001). In this case study, the artifacts from the students were used to further analyze the vocabulary strategies presented by the teachers, the extent to which they were used by the students, and to determine if they were assisting the ELLs in learning and understanding content and/or skills. These artifacts were collected by digital photographs in every classroom, mainly through the bulletin boards of student work displayed by the 18 participating teachers during the classroom observations. Other artifacts were photographed from the student journals and others from the actual independent activities that the students were completing at the time of the visit. There were no specific guidelines to follow while collecting the artifacts, since these were collected as they became available during the classroom observations. Additionally, in order to protect the students and their anonymity, their names are not visible in any digital photograph of the artifacts collected.

Teacher Interviews

The teacher interviews with member-check protocols, where the teachers verified their interpretation of interviews, were implemented (Angen, 2000). The 18 teacher participants from the selected campuses were interviewed using the Schema Theoretical perspective previously mentioned in Chapter I, in order to examine their individual construct of knowledge pertaining to the teaching of vocabulary in their classroom and

provide the necessary background knowledge of word meaning (see Appendix F). Additionally, after the interviews were transcribed, member-checks were implemented for verification and validation with the participating teachers, and data reflections were documented in order to gather themes more precisely. Because schemata can be divided into three components (Carrell, 1984): (a) linguistic schema (readers' existing language knowledge about phonemes, vocabulary and grammar); (b) formal schema (readers' background knowledge on the features and organizational patterns of various writing styles); and (c) content schema (readers' background knowledge of the content area of a text) (Yi & Zhang, 2006, p. 2). The questions reflected this information and were implemented during the interviews.

Field notes were also taken during the interviews when more space was needed to record the responses and transcribed. Final transcripts became available for the teachers to review and verify for accuracy, as needed or whenever requested through member-checks (Angen, 2000).

Control for Researcher Biases

In order to control for bias, avoid conflicts of expected behaviors, and to increase the dependability of the usable data collected, I was the only investigator for the study. Being a sole investigator assists with the dependability and accuracy because there is only one person collecting data, with one perspective and one objective.

Furthermore, my knowledge about vocabulary instruction has been built based on previous positions I have held throughout my career. I have worked as a reading intervention teacher for a campus, literacy coach as well, a reading technical assistant for

the State of Texas, an assistant principal, a district coordinator, and as an adjunct instructor for a local university. During the time that I worked as a reading technical assistant for the State of Texas, I was able to observe teachers and students in action during reading instruction. The 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction was a non-negotiable for the participating campuses and the teachers were trained to teach reading instruction through the five components of reading: (a) phonological awareness, (b) phonics, (c) fluency, (d) vocabulary, and (e) comprehension. Extensive training was provided to me, as a trainer of trainers from the research center, Children's Learning Institute from Houston, Texas; and the Vaughn Gross Center for Reading Research, from Austin, Texas, to name a few. All the professional development that I received was dealing with best practices for reading instruction.

In return, part of my job included training the teachers of the participating campuses and then performing follow-up campus visits. I will never forget a student in a 3rd grade classroom who did not know the word *meadow*, and his understanding was that of the word *medal*. I waited patiently for the teacher to address such word and he did not take advantage of that teachable moment. When the student shared his schema about the word, he said, "Like the *medal* you wear when you win a race?" The teacher responded, "No, this word is *meadow*, but don't worry this is not the answer for this question." You can imagine how I felt; therefore, I took the teacher aside and explained the importance of teaching this vocabulary word; to my surprise the teacher admitted that he himself was not familiar with such word. My teacher instinct kicked in and I took over the lesson; I explained to the students what a *meadow* was in the simplest terms. A *meadow*

is a field of grassland. I asked them if anyone has ever seen a *meadow*. Some replied yes, others no, and others did not say a word. I asked for permission to use the computer and I looked up images of the word *meadow*. I was so relieved to see such great responses from the students. As their background knowledge-schema was activating, I realized they were familiar with the concept; however, they did not know the vocabulary term in English. I then turned back to the teacher and I explained to him that when there is an unknown word, to use the dictionary, and/or the internet, because they are among the best resources for teachers.

Because the direct involvement of the researcher in the data collection and analysis is one of the key challenges of qualitative research (Creswell, 2003; Silverman, 2001; Stake, 1995), steps are taken to limit the impact of any bias. This is accomplished through a process wherein the study participants are allowed to review and clarify transcripts from the interview and statements made during data collection through member checks. Furthermore, in an attempt to limit any bias in this study, each teacher was given the opportunity to review the record from his or her interview and make any statements or clarifications deemed appropriate. Additionally, attempts were made to confirm data by triangulating through multiple sources, rather than relying only on teacher interviews. Specifically, this involved several sources: classroom observations and the collection of digital photographs of student artifacts from the classroom bulletin boards, and at times, as students were working on an independent activity.

Being a sole investigator enables the researcher to “establish patterns and look for correspondence between two or more cases” (Creswell, 2007, p. 163; Stake 1995;

Yin, 2003). As the principal investigator, I used the Classroom Observation Tool (see Appendix G), since it provided me with a standard set of guidelines about best practices in vocabulary instruction and procedures to follow, while observing vocabulary instruction at the different elementary schools participating in the study. In addition, this tool redirected my focus at all times, as it assisted me in maintaining a sense of objectivity. After the classroom observations, I recorded field notes in my journal that allowed me to reflect on the delivery of instruction occurring in the classroom; this is known as *reflexivity* and helps the researcher recognize possible biases and to actively seek them out (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (1998) viewed a reflective account of the research process and the researcher's perspective as "an explicit account of where the researcher is coming from" and "the ethnographic version of the truth in advertising" (p. 294). Perhaps multiple observers and establishing inter-rater reliability would have been an improvement in this study to further enhance the dependability of the coding described (Auerbach, La Porte, & Caputo, 2004).

Nonetheless, other researchers such as Ary, Jacobs, Asghar, and Sorenson (2006) recommended keeping a reflective journal that contains the following information: (a) a daily schedule that includes the logistics of the study; (b) entries describing decisions made and the rationale for them; and (c) reflections on your thoughts, feelings, ideas, questions, concerns, problems, and/or frustrations. I did keep a journal and it allowed me to organize myself with the scheduled visits for the day, and reflections about the classroom observations were also recorded. As I visited the classrooms and observed the vocabulary instruction being delivered and filled out the classroom observation tool, I

would make a note of those observations that needed further reflection. At the end of the day, I would come home and further reflect about effective vocabulary instruction being observed. One observation in particular was in a 4th grade classroom from LA where the teacher was teaching the word *emerge*; a student in particular was able to make a connection about this term with a popular TV show, *The Walking Dead* and how he remembered that the zombies emerged from the house. The understanding of the student was legitimate and the teacher did an excellent job of activating his background knowledge to help the student better understand the term. The student was able to make a connection with the world to text and evidence of the development of his vocabulary was confirmed as well. In this study, the objective was vocabulary instruction, the delivery of vocabulary instruction, and the implementation of an effective classroom environment; therefore, a reflective journal was kept in order to assist in the data analysis.

Qualitative Analysis Procedures

Triangulation of data (Yin, 2003) is the intended qualitative method that was used to analyze the separate case responses through the classroom observations, collected artifacts, and teacher interviews, in order to determine commonalities or unique differences as a source of validity for this study. Hardy and Bryman (2009) stated that the data analysis method is perhaps the most critical stage of the research process, as it attempts to turn raw data into usable findings that can help further the knowledge of a research topic. Immediate feedback was recorded on the field notes during my research in order to be more accurate in reporting the data findings. Furthermore, research

confirms that qualitative findings (such as those received from the interview process and observation) can often be hard to analyze, due to the sheer amount of data received and in the reviewing of the raw data as well (Boeije, 2009).

Yin (2003) further stated, “A case study’s focus should be to maximize four conditions related to design quality: construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability” (p. 19). Validity and reliability were established by the amount and type of evidence that was collected throughout this study to support the interpretations about vocabulary procedures and strategies implemented by the teachers in their classroom. Conclusions were drawn based on the data obtained.

Establishing research that is noted as respectable and valued is essential in the trustworthiness achieved through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 1995). “The purpose of research is not merely to collect data, but to use such data to draw warranted conclusions, about the people, (and others like them), on whom the data were collected” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 151). Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were established through data collection of classroom observations, collection of artifacts through digital photographs (over 200 collected), and teacher interviews.

Merriam (1998) stated that the “right way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection” (p. 62). Throughout the research, I made comments in the field notes as participants were observed, interviewed, and on the student artifacts collected through digital photographs. After each data collection point, I

recorded my thoughts in a journal and captured responses from each participant recording emerging themes, key phrases or patterns, thoughts and feelings, similarities, or differences about the vocabulary instruction being delivered. This is also known as an *audit trail* that assists any researcher to explain how decisions were made and the uniqueness of the situation studied (Ary et al., 2006).

As such, this information helps attest to the dependability of the procedures employed and can assist a reviewer of this study in determining whether the findings are confirmable. By immediately reflecting on the data, I began to organize the data and generate the themes and codes necessary for a qualitative case study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). Additionally, since I was the principal investigator and the only one involved in collecting the data, I also integrated the *code-recode strategy* in order to establish *intra-rater dependability* while generating the codes (Ary et al., 2006).

Process for Coding

Coding has been defined as “the most interesting stage of data analysis; it involves further examination of the datasets and subsets and further organizing, manipulating, dissecting and reconnecting the information to create an intricately woven picture of the research phenomenon” (Craig, 2009, p. 189). This is not a very easy process as the organization of the researcher is a must. I found myself keeping all of the files organized by campus. In every folder, I filed the consent forms, the classroom observations with digital photographs taken of the artifacts, and the teacher interviews with accompanying field notes where necessary. It is also stated by Craig (2009) that the use of coding with qualitative data allows the researcher “to use creativity as a

researcher and an expert in creating categories, defining attributes and explaining what took place in the research environment through descriptive storytelling” (p. 189) (see Appendix H for a sample of this process).

The use of coding provides the researcher with the ability to control the raw data and ensure that it can be transformed into usable data sets for the purpose of the study. During this process, the *code-recode strategy* was implemented while coding some of the data. Once the coding was complete for the classroom observations of the first campus (HA1) being analyzed, I subsequently returned (a week later) to recode the same data. I was able to identify the degree of agreement at 94%, between the two sets of coded materials and as the investigator; it was an additional means to establish dependability in the conduct of the study (Ary et al., 2006). The same process was implemented for the other two campuses. The degree of agreement for second campus (LA) was also at a 94% of agreement, and the third campus (HA2) was at an 89% of agreement after recoding.

General themes were grouped and the data were disaggregated for each campus. This process is generally referred to as thematic analysis. Boyatzis (1998) elaborated that “thematic analysis enables scholars, observers, or practitioners to use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner that increases their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations about people, events, situations, and organizations” (p. 5).

Member Checking

Member checking and triangulation were also utilized in the study. These two processes allowed for the determination of trustworthiness of the research. The procedure of member checking is another strategy through which researchers try to ensure the trustworthiness of their data and research altogether. It entails the incorporation of participants in the data analysis process, and it affords them the opportunity to read, elaborate, and give feedback on the findings (Curtin & Fossey, 2007).

Tuckett (2005) stated that some writers will define member checking as a process of confirming or refuting meaning as “sending it back” to the participants to ensure that what was understood was credible and valid. There is not an overwhelming agreement on the value of member checking, as some researchers do not feel that it serves a useful purpose. I found member checking as a positive process to allow participants to review and revise their responses after the interviews were transcribed. I used it as a method of confirmation, and the teachers felt more at ease because they were able to make revisions to some of their responses, if they deemed it necessary. Out of the 18 participating teachers in the study, only 3 teachers made revisions to their interview responses.

Analysis of Research Data

Before the data were analyzed, I transcribed the interviews of each participant into the computer without delay (within a two-week period or at times even one week after the interviews occurred to ensure evidence of quality) and had the participants

member check for validity; three teachers made revisions to their interview transcripts. In this record of study, I organized the data for each campus, developing a table (See Appendix G). Horizontal rows represented participant codes, while vertical columns indicated the themes I identified while analyzing the data, initially working from key words in my interview questions with a selective coding in order to develop core categories. Under each participant code, I included quotes related to the themes that I identified from their respective transcripts. Initially, this organizational process allowed me to identify commonalities or differences, when they existed, for each theme. Second, it provided me with an organizational tool to identify more defined themes from the classroom observations and the digital photographs of student products.

Creswell (2014) referred to this process as “organizing the material into chunks or segments of text and assigning a word or phrase to the segment in order to develop a general sense of it” (p. 241). The analysis of this data in the research involved triangulation of data through (a) analysis of key words during the interview process, (b) similarities and differences of vocabulary instruction and strategies during the classroom observations, and (c) evidence drawn about vocabulary procedures through the collection of student artifacts.

The primary coding implemented for this research was selective coding that involves developing core categories to identify the main themes and patterns (Merriam, 2009). This process was used for each individual transcript review; so each of the 18 transcriptions was treated separately and categorized for the analysis (Merriam, 2002). When categorizing the data, themes were identified that served as subcategories for

every participant in the triangulation process (classroom observations, collection of artifacts, and teacher interviews). The process continued until all relevant themes were identified and labeled. Then, they were compared to each other and reported with a qualitative narrative, “using the wording from participants” (Creswell, 2009, p. 194) that allowed me to interpret the responses of both the principals and the teachers participating in the study.

The final stage of the analysis involved a detailed description of the themes emerging from each campus and across campuses to identify similarities and differences (Creswell, 2007). Attributes of highly effective vocabulary strategies and procedures were identified at all three campuses; and under each theme, appropriate examples from the separate cases were also provided.

Furthermore, the three types of validity as identified by Yin (2009) were addressed in this qualitative study—construct, internal, and external validity. *Construct validity* requires the identification of correct operational measures for the concepts being studied (Yin, 2009). The researcher’s observations must reflect what the author stated he/she wanted to observe (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). For this study, it was effective vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures. Data in the form of standardized test results (operational measures) served as an additional source of evidence to indicate if the vocabulary strategies and procedures identified did or did not contribute positively to students’ reading achievement in the three elementary campuses participating in the study. Additionally, the study design included triangulation to capture multiple sources

of evidence. These sources included the classroom observations, the teacher interviews, and the student artifacts.

Yin (2009) described *internal validity* as that which establishes a causal relationship between defined conditions within a study. This type of validity is established if the research identifies certain conditions that directly lead to other conditions and through explanation building combining multiple perspectives (Yin, 2009). For example, an organized, systematic plan for collecting information was built into the proposed design of the project. The validity of data gathered during the teacher interviews was assessed by determining its usefulness in helping me understand the context and the vocabulary instructional procedures and strategies implemented in the study (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Data from the classroom observations and student artifacts were closely examined in order to assist in answering descriptive research questions, to build a theory, for validity, and to generate, or test, a hypothesis (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). Again, being the sole investigator provided me with the opportunity to gather data under one perspective, analyze and review observations immediately, transcribe interviews, conduct member checks of the transcribed interview data with participants, reflect as necessary in my journal, and collect digital photographs from all participants.

Finally, *external validity* refers to the generalization of the results. The defined domains were the schools as identified for the research (Yin, 2009). External validity was addressed as an analytic generalization that incorporated data that had been pooled across all schools involved in the study. Validity is to intent, as reliability is to

dependability or consistency. Furthermore, “when multiple cases are chosen, a typical format is to first provide a detailed description of each case and themes within the case, called a within-case analysis, followed by a thematic analysis across the cases, called a cross-case analysis, as well as assertions or an interpretation of the meaning of the case” (Creswell, 2007, p. 75).

Limitations Found in the Study

A limiting factor was that the study only included a uniquely selective group of schools due to the purposeful sampling. To diminish the impact of this limitation, it was necessary to carefully select high-achieving campuses as evidenced by their STAAR reading assessment data for their ELLs and a low-achieving campus that shared the same demographics as one of the high-achieving campuses just to demonstrate that success is attainable.

Shipman (1997) noted that the existence of limitations occurs in any research study, with all researchers held by some form of boundary in their attempt to discover an understanding of a particular subject. These limitations can occur through a lack of knowledge or lack of resources that can prevent the researcher from attempting too much. It has been noted that it is more effective to focus on a small and achievable target within a research study than try to attempt too much or to have too broad of an aim and fail (Cryer, 2006). With this point made, it was evident that this study had limitations due to its sample size and the methods selected in obtaining the data necessary to present conclusions.

It should be noted that the results reflect the findings from only three campuses and may not provide a fair reflection of the entire school district of this U.S.-Mexico border community. The length of time of the observations was 25 minutes long; perhaps the observations could have been longer in order to acquire more information about the vocabulary instruction being presented by the teachers to the students.

As previously mentioned, my main perspective was focused on vocabulary instruction being delivered by the teacher and the assessment of the students' current knowledge of vocabulary words by maximizing their engagement of the lesson presented and building or activating their prior knowledge. Once again, principals assisted me in the selection of the teachers; although I asked them to provide me not necessarily with the best teachers they had in their campus, that was something I could not control. According to the teacher profiles, two of the teachers from LA held a Master's degree in school administration; however, there was no substantial difference between the vocabulary instruction provided by these teachers and the vocabulary instruction delivered by the rest of the teachers participating in the study. For example, all teachers in the study followed the district's scope and sequence; nonetheless, they all had the administrative support to modify the instruction based on the needs of the ELLs in their classrooms.

The results of the study could help to further acquire knowledge about the component of vocabulary, the frequency of culturally responsive teaching, and effective vocabulary instruction for ELLs. The teachers and administrators have requested a copy of the findings that will be provided once the record of study has been completed.

Ethical Considerations

As well as covering the limitations of the study, it was also important to delineate the key ethical considerations taken before the research study was conducted. For any research study, this is important, but it is particularly pertinent for research based within the education system, where studies might refer to students who are still minors and for legal purposes.

Within the discussion of work with children (minors), even when children are not the primary participants in the study, it is necessary to take a number of precautions to ensure that the civil liberties of children and the participants involved are not placed in jeopardy. General research ethical standards state, “Researchers are ethically required to protect the confidentiality of both the participants and the data” (Johnson & Christensen, 2012, p. 116). This is an important consideration and means that at all times, the researcher had to ensure that any personal information was not presented that could lead to the identification of the participants in the study. Therefore, participants were assured of their identity protection, with the researcher keeping the data encrypted in a file that will then be destroyed as per the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines.

Furthermore, all participants were informed that up until the completion of the research, they were able to withdraw from the study at any time and all information regarding their participation would be removed (Denscombe, 2010). Tables 3.4, 3.5, and 3.6 illustrate the codes used to identify the principals, teachers, and artifacts from High-Achieving School 1 (HA1), High-Achieving School 2 (HA2), and the Low-Achieving School (LA), respectively, that were involved in this study.

Table 3.4. Codes Assigned to Participants from HA1

Participants	Codes
Principal	101
Third Grade teachers	103(a), (b)
Fourth Grade teachers	104(a), (b)
Fifth Grade teachers	105(a), (b)
Artifacts from 3 rd grade classrooms	203(a), (b)
Artifacts from 4 th grade classrooms	204 (a), (b)
Artifacts from 5 th grade classrooms	205 (a), (b)

Table 3.5. Codes Assigned to Participants from HA2

Participants	Codes
Principal	102
Third Grade teachers	303(a), (b)
Fourth Grade teachers	304(a), (b)
Fifth Grade teachers	305(a), (b)
Artifacts from 3 rd grade classrooms	403(a), (b)
Artifacts from 4 th grade classrooms	404 (a), (b)
Artifacts from 5 th grade classrooms	405 (a), (b)

Table 3.6. Codes Assigned to Participants from LA

Participants	Codes
Principal	103
Third Grade teachers	503(a), (b)
Fourth Grade teachers	504(a), (b)
Fifth Grade teachers	505(a), (b)
Artifacts from 3 rd grade classrooms	603(a), (b)
Artifacts from 4 th grade classrooms	604 (a), (b)
Artifacts from 5 th grade classrooms	605 (a), (b)

The use of codes for participants ensures that the data were easy to organize and meant that the participants did not have to worry about any information being provided about their identity. All classroom observations, collection of artifacts, and teacher

interviews were kept confidential with codes in keeping with research-standard ethical procedures concerning research in an educational setting (Shipman, 1997). No students were used as participants in this study, and all participants were over the age of research consent.

Summary

The focus of my research methodology was to provide faculty and administrators information about features of effective vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures that leads to successful STAAR reading scores for ELLs. I individually performed classroom observations, collected photographs of artifacts about vocabulary from students, and finally engaged in interviews with the participating teachers with member checking for validity purposes. Overall, each campus, whether identified as high-achieving or low-achieving, was able to demonstrate its potential and the '*ganas*' to educate our ELLs.

Acknowledging the limitations, the study focused on a small area in a U.S.-Mexico border community in South Texas, and therefore, the use of one school district (18 teacher participants and 3 principals) meant that the findings were localized in their circle of influence. Following the data collection, the results were assessed using a coding process to help arrive at the findings that are presented in the next chapter through a descriptive case analysis and with a triangulation of data as well.

CHAPTER IV

THE FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS*

Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected, as well as the themes identified. My purpose for conducting this study was to investigate if comparisons or contrasts existed in English vocabulary instructional strategies that promoted academic reading achievement in the STAAR reading assessment with ELLs in the three participating campuses within a U.S.-Mexico border community. Keeping in mind that research on how children acquire vocabulary indicates that it is a complex process. In their review of vocabulary processes, Nagy and Scott (2000) described the complexity of word knowledge. Among the factors that Nagy and Scott (2000) identified were that word knowledge is incremental, as it occurs in small steps over time, and words can have multiple meaning, especially those that are encountered most frequently in language. Word knowledge is multidimensional and includes knowing what it means and how it is related to other words (Nagy & Scott, 2000). In addition, the pronunciation of a word is important and how to use it in a sentence is significant, as well (Rogers & Webb, 1991). Word knowledge is interrelated, which means, how well a word is understood is correlated to how much background knowledge and schema the person has about the domain in which the word is used (Ajideh, 2003; Nagy & Scott, 2000).

*Reprinted with permission from “But I’m just their teacher—Why should I care? The effects of a caring centered environment in the literacy achievement of ELLs” by C. Pompa, S. Higareda, C. Treviño, and C. Guerra, 2011. *Journal of Border Educational Research*, 9, 113-122, Copyright 2016 by Carmen Amparo Pompa.

Specifically, the purpose of this study was to answer three key research questions:

1. What are the vocabulary instructional procedures identified from the classroom observations, the student artifacts, and the teacher interviews in the two-high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?
2. Is there evidence of culturally responsive teaching among the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?
3. Are there differences and similarities among vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures evidenced from the teacher interviews in each of the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school? And if so, what are they?

Procedures for Data Analysis

The procedures used for this study included an analysis of the classroom observations, student artifacts, and teacher interviews at all three campuses. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identities of principals, faculty, and their school names. I also included background information of teachers to provide a perspective about the experiences shared throughout this study and the number of ELLs they served during the school year. All interviews were conducted in the teachers' classroom and were completed within 30 to 45 minutes of time. I decided to conduct the interviews in their classroom because I wanted for them to feel comfortable and secure during this process.

By providing this information, readers gain a sense of the diverse participant backgrounds, including approximate work experience, knowledge about vocabulary

instruction, and personal attributes. I then identified and described, based on my analysis and participant confirmation, four main themes that emerged from this study. The following section presents a description of the data tools, the participating campuses, principals and teachers—all protected under pseudonyms.

Classroom Observation Tool

The Classroom Observation Tool examines vocabulary instructional practices and culturally responsive teaching (CRT). The instructional practices are described as being *strong* 2+ if they are observed two or more times; *OK* if observed once; and *0* if not observed. I opted not to count those that were *OK* or observed only once because I wanted stronger evidence altogether and to me demonstrating instructional practices only once was not strong enough. Thirteen (13) procedures are presented, 10 of which reflect highly effective practices (HES) in teaching vocabulary effectively (Procedures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13). The researchers supporting these practices are listed following each of the instructional strategies.

Instructional Strategies

Instructional strategy 1. Providing preparation for vocabulary instruction through a systematic approach (e.g., separating words into Tiers, implementation of word maps, graphic organizers, providing student friendly definitions, synonyms, concept attainment, “mental anchors” with visuals, etc.) (Spencer & Guillaume, 2006; VanDeWeghe, 2007; Vitale & Romance, 2008).

Instructional strategy 2. Giving explicit instruction with modeling (activating/building background knowledge, making connections, word walls, semantic

maps—before, during, and after reading, multiple encounters of the words are available for students, etc.) (Echeverria et al., 2004; Santoro, Chard, Howard, & Baker, 2008).

Instructional strategy 3. Assessing students' current knowledge level of the target lesson vocabulary words (vocabulary foldables, webs, visuals, etc.) are created by students (student artifacts) (Scarcella, 2003).

Instructional strategy 4. Prompting students to assume an active role (e.g., listening, responding, taking notes on journal, providing examples or non-examples) during instruction of new vocabulary terms (Lauer, Palmer, Van Buhler, & Fries, 2002).

Instructional strategy 5. Allowing the students to read independently through novels, basal stories, and/or informational texts at their instructional level (Wilfong, 2013).

Instructional strategy 7. Pronouncing new words clearly and prompting students to repeat the words chorally, maximizing engagement—engagement of student with student-friendly definitions and classroom discussions (Rogers & Webb, 1991).

Instructional strategy 9. Providing students with opportunities to use vocabulary words in context through listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Gersten et al., 2007).

Instructional strategy 10. Providing a note-taking scaffold for less proficient readers and English language learners (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2004).

Instructional strategy 11. Checking for understanding with concrete task/questions that require critical thinking/immediate and corrective feedback from teacher (Greenwood & Flanigan, 2007; Pearson & Fielding, 1991).

Instructional strategy 13. Allowing students to speak in their Native language when they do not know a vocabulary word in English (Garcia, 1991, 1996; Manyak, 2007).

Three of these procedures (6, 8, & 12) are considered to reflect the implementation of less effective strategies (LES). The researchers supporting these characterizations are listed after each of the following least effective strategies.

Least effective strategy 1. Asking students to look for the definition of the word in the dictionary and recording it in a journal or on any type of writing paper (Marzano, 2004).

Least effective strategy 8. Asking students to write the word multiple times (5 times, 10 times, etc.) (Marzano, 2004).

Least effective strategy 12. Providing students with a list of vocabulary and spelling words to study for a test at the end of the week (Allen, 1997).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

For the purpose of this study, highly effective strategies “challenge and engage *all* students and adapt required curriculum, resources, and standards to meet student needs and interests; they also counteract the effects of poverty” (Routman, 2012, p. 56). The second part of this Classroom Observation Tool covers elements that best describe a classroom environment conducive to learning as it pertains to culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2000). It includes nine (9) components.

1. Teacher communicates high expectations (provides positive reinforcement, respect for the students, and a strong belief in the student’s ability to learn).

2. Teacher facilitates learning (role is more of a mentor or facilitator within an active learning environment).
3. Teacher communicates to parents positive perspectives about their child.
4. Teacher demonstrates cultural sensitivity to all of his/her students (provides literature of different cultures, genres, based on the student's needs).
5. Teacher promotes student classroom discourse (more student talk, less teacher talk; students are provided with opportunities to develop language acquisition).
6. Teacher includes small group instruction and cooperative learning (opportunities to interact with peers, discussion of vocabulary words with peers, and more as a facilitator).
7. Classroom environment is conducive to learning (bulletin boards display student work-artifacts; scaffolds are provided for support; etc.).
8. Teacher plans are available and on target.
9. There is a teacher and student relationship.

Teacher Interview Questionnaire

The teacher interview questionnaire consisted of five questions (See Appendix F). The questions were about vocabulary instruction and culturally responsive teaching. The focus was to determine the participating teachers' knowledge about teaching vocabulary and effective vocabulary instruction. Next, I will list the questions as they were presented to the teachers.

Question 1

Do you follow a prescribed curriculum or are you empowered to make educational decisions for your students? What do you like best? What are your frustrations? Provide an educational decision you have made for a student.

Question 2

How many professional development sessions dealing with vocabulary instruction or teaching vocabulary have you attended within the last two years at school or with the district over your teaching career? Provide examples and describe why these practices are successful. How are you accountable for the implementation of such professional development? Are you frequently visited by campus administrators, instructional coordinators, etc., to verify the implementation of effective strategies?

Question 3

What strategies incorporating effective vocabulary instruction do you implement for your students while teaching a lesson? How frequently do you teach vocabulary? How many ELLs do you currently serve in your classroom?

Question 4

What constitutes an effective vocabulary program? What is good about your instructional delivery? Do you build/activate prior knowledge about language? If so, how? Do you build/activate prior knowledge when asking students to write? If so, how? Do you build/activate prior knowledge when presenting a skill or a concept? If so, how?

Question 5

Are you familiar with the model of culturally responsive teaching? If so, describe.

The 18 teachers participating were interviewed. Their interviews were transcribed for the teachers to verify through member checking, and some slight modifications by three of the participating teachers were made as a final copy was presented to all of the participating teachers individually to review. After the last meeting that consisted of the member checks, I presented the teachers with two books as a gesture of appreciation for their participation, *Academic Language for English Language Learners and Struggling Readers* by Yvonne S. Freeman and David E. Freeman and *Classroom Instruction that Works with English Language Learners* by Jane D. Hill and Cynthia L Bjork. I also presented them with a personalized thank you card for their participation and dedication in support of my study.

Artifacts Collected During the Study

The artifacts for this study that consisted of digital photographs of graphic organizers, foldables, bulletin board graphics, classroom libraries, word walls, academic posters for the different content areas, lesson plans, letters to parents, etc. within their classroom environments were collected as the classroom observations were being performed. These digital photographs of artifacts were collected mostly from the bulletin boards displaying student work inside the classroom and at times from students completing an independent activity. As mentioned previously, Spradley (1980) described artifacts as what people make and use. For the purpose of this study, the artifacts

collected served as evidence of vocabulary development of the students and evidence of the vocabulary strategies being implemented by the teachers.

Because I did not want to keep the students' work as samples of artifacts for the study and in order to work faster while gathering the data, digital photographs seemed most appropriate. While I was taking the digital photographs with my iPhone, some students approached me and requested that a photograph be taken of their work; I gladly complied.

Responses to the Research Questions

Responses to Research Question 1

The research question was "What are the vocabulary instructional procedures identified from the classroom observations, the student artifacts, and the teacher interviews in the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?" The responses to Research Question 1 are described as they pertain to each school. Namely, data pertaining to campuses HA1, HA2, and LA are presented in this order.

In all three campuses, the principals were very positive and provided a learning environment for students and teachers. If you remember in Chapter III, I did mention that they all at one point had worked under one particular principal; this principal was their mentor. I found that all three-campus principals shared leadership qualities from their mentor and during some of my visits; they would mention activities and/or initiatives that they would implement because they learned them from their mentor. In the following paragraphs, I will identify the vocabulary instructional strategies and

procedures found in each of the three campuses and those that were identified from the classroom observations, the student artifacts, and the teacher interviews.

High-Achieving Campus 1 (HA1): Principal Interview

Alberto, the first-year principal at this campus, described himself as “a lifelong learner; one who continuously improves upon processes or procedures used for the betterment of faculty, staff, and students.” In addition, he stated that he is “one who wants his campus to achieve the best status in the state accountability system.” In his own words:

I believe in consistency in every classroom by following a prescribed curriculum, filled with academic vocabulary and lifelong skills. I do empower my teachers to make the best educational decisions as a team depending on the needs of the students. What is good for one, is good for everyone, let’s make it work! Really, if the curriculum is consistent in the classrooms, regular students, ELLs, and Special Education students will all benefit.

Alberto demonstrated excellent leadership qualities and offered assistance every time I visited his campus. During one of my visits, I had the opportunity to listen to him during the afternoon announcements and the review of the college word of the day, as part of the vocabulary instructional procedures at his campus. I also want to add that Alberto has the best voice; he sounds like a professional radio disk jockey, with background music and all. He made me feel happy about being at his school and the students and teachers listening to him were also very joyful—truly a jolly good fellow. He also stated that his afternoon announcements were always filled with something positive for the students to take home with them. As an assistant principal, he learned from his principal to close the instructional day on a positive note.

In addition, some of his leadership qualities included: (a) greeting parents and students as they were walking into the school; (b) dressing very professionally and serving as a role model for students and staff; (c) monitoring the hallways of the school every morning, for safety was one of his main priorities; and (d) attending to concerned parents waiting to speak to him at his office (Fullan, 2006).

Classroom observations for HA1: 3rd to 5th grade teachers. The findings in Table 4.1 identify the highly effective strategies that were implemented most of the time by the teachers in the different grades and the least effective strategies that were used by a few of the teachers as part of their vocabulary instructional procedures for this campus. The two types of vocabulary strategies are explained under their respective headings. The Classroom Observation Tool used the Vocabulary Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms and the Classroom Environment (See Appendix G) was from HA1 – Highly Effective Strategies (1-5, 7; 9-11, 13) scoring 2+ (Strong); Least Effective Strategies (6, 8, 12) scoring 1 or 2+. For LES scoring of 0% means that none were observed. Classroom Environment (1-9) scoring 2+ (Strong) are the only identified. To better understand the tables illustrated below, the following mathematical procedures were implemented. HES 1-5, 7 contains 6 strategies identified as teacher-centered, multiplied by two teachers observed per grade level, equals 12. Then, we multiply the 12 (strategies) times 5 observations completed per teacher by the observer, equals 60. The same procedure is applied for HES 9-11, 13; however, these add up to 4 strategies identified as student-centered. For each of the LES, we gather the 2 teachers participating per grade level times 5 observations each equals 10. Finally, for the

classroom environment we gather the 2 teachers per grade level multiplied by 5 observations each equals 10. Then, we multiply the 10 to the 9 identified components, which equals 90. These mathematical procedures are applied to Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3.

Table 4.1

Classroom Observation for HA1

Vocabulary Instructional Procedures	HES: 1-5, 7 Score: 2+	HES: 9-11, 13 Score: 2+	LES: 6 Score: 0	LES: 8 Score: 0	LES: 12 Score: 0	C. Environment 1-9 Score: 2+
3 rd grade teachers	36/60= 60%	22/40= 55%	1/10= 10%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	53/90= 58%
4 th grade teachers	34/60= 57%	26/40= 65%	1/10= 10%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	59/90= 66%
5 th grade teachers	28/60= 47%	18/40= 45%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	41/90= 46%

Note. CRT will be analyzed as Research Question 2 and is answered later in the chapter.

Highly effective strategies. Highly effective strategies (HES) 1-5 and 7 were implemented with the highest percentage among the 3rd grade teachers from this campus. The results indicated that out of 60 opportunities to score a 2+ (for evidence score to be *strong*), the 3rd grade teachers were observed implementing HES 1-5 and 7 on 36 different occasions or 60% of the time. Altogether, the data in Table 4.1 show very low percentages of implementation for HES; nonetheless, specific examples of these HES are provided below with actual observations captured in the classrooms of HA1:

1. Preparation for vocabulary instruction through a systematic approach (e.g., separating words into tiers, implementation of word maps, graphic organizers, providing student friendly definitions, synonyms, concept attainment, “mental anchors” with visuals, etc.). The 3rd grade teachers at this campus provided

their students with the use of synonyms as a strategy; for example, what is another word for *convince*? Students responded: talk into, persuade. What is another word for *direction*? Students responded: road, way of going. What is the synonym for *observant*? Students responded: vigilant, watchful. Another strategy frequently observed was the use of student-friendly definitions; for example, what is a student friendly definition for *obey*? Students responded: to follow, to listen, do as you are told. Visuals were also integrated in preparation for vocabulary instruction. Teachers provided vocabulary words on the word wall, with a visual and a student friendly definition. Students knew that the word walls were provided as scaffolds and a set procedure for them to use during oral responses and written responses in their journals. I also observed constant requests by the teachers to the students to respond in complete sentence and to use the vocabulary words of the week as much as possible.

2. Explicit instruction with modeling (activating/building background knowledge, making connections, word walls, semantic maps—before, during, and after reading, multiple encounters of the words are available for students, etc.).

Both 3rd and 5th grade teachers at this campus implemented the procedure of building of background knowledge while modeling the vocabulary words of the week. For example, with respect to the word *produce*—Teacher asked: What does *produce* remind you of? Students responded: product, production. So if you *produce* something? Students responded: you make it. Another strategy that was highly integrated was the making connections strategy. Teacher said: The word *inherited* means something that is passed on from one's family. Does anyone have something that has been *inherited*? Students

responded: My mom has a ring that my grandmother gave to her—she *inherited* that ring. Teacher asked: Can you *inherit* clothes from your older brother? Students responded: Yes, because he has passed some of his shirts to me.

3. Assessing student’s current knowledge level of the target lesson vocabulary words (vocabulary foldables, webs, visuals, etc.) created by students (student artifacts). Both 4th and 5th grade teachers at this campus assessed the vocabulary knowledge of the students by asking them to complete graphic organizers on character traits by questioning the students about certain visuals and checking that the students were implementing them as scaffolds and by creating vocabulary foldables as a vocabulary strategy. The vocabulary foldables the students created were glued to one of the pages of their journal and used as a reference/resource.

4. Prompting students to assume an active role (e.g., listening, responding, taking notes on journal, providing examples or non-examples) during instruction of new vocabulary terms. The 4th grade teachers at this campus implemented journal writing as part of a district initiative across the content areas. Students kept a journal for reading, language arts, science, math, and social studies. The journals were kept in the students’ desks, and the teachers reminded the students that these journals were another tool to assist them in their learning.

5. Allowing the students to read independently through novels, basal stories, and/or informational texts at their instructional level. The 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers at this campus were required to provide a classroom library. After students completed their content assignments, they knew that the expectation was to grab

a book from the classroom library and to read it. Teachers would inform their students about the importance of reading and how reading helps to expand vocabulary, as vocabulary words are used in different contexts and are part of a story. Ultimately, independent reading procedures can assist in better understanding of words, their definitions, and use, rather than simply using a dictionary to look up definitions.

7. Pronouncing new words clearly and prompting students to repeat the words chorally, maximizing engagement; engagement of students with student-friendly definitions and classroom discussions. The 3rd grade teachers at HA1 asked students to read chorally, while reading stories from the adopted basal, stopped and checked for understanding by asking questions, and encouraged classroom discussions.

9. Students are provided with opportunities to use vocabulary words in context through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The 4th grade teachers at this campus implemented the use of instructional videos connected to the story of the week. During the viewing of the videos, the students were provided with the opportunity to listen to the video. After viewing and listening to the video, the teacher then asked the students to turn to their partner and share their favorite part of the video. The students were then asked to reflect on their favorite part of the video in writing (journal entry) and then to present their journal entry to the class.

10. Providing a note-taking scaffold for less proficient readers and English language learners. One of the teachers from HA1 really comes to mind as far as allowing the students to take notes, as she explained the objective and activity to be completed. This is an example from a 3rd grade teacher and her students; the objective

was to write an acrostic poem. The teacher explained to her students that an *acrostic poem* uses the letters in a word to begin each line of the poem. The teacher asks the students to write notes about this because they will be creating their personal *acrostic poems*. She provided an example by using her first name in the poem and using adjectives to describe her. The students became very excited and rapidly began to form their *acrostic poems* with their first names. As the students brainstormed for words to help them write their poems, the teacher monitored and provided feedback by encouraging academic vocabulary in their *acrostic poems*. For example, a student with the letter *S* in her name wanted to use the word *student* as part of her description. The teacher prompted her and asked her to describe the word *student*, by asking, “What kind of a student are you?” The young girl thought for a minute and then came up with the word *studious*.

11. Checking for understanding with a concrete task/question that requires critical thinking/immediate and corrective feedback from the teacher. The teachers (3rd-5th) check for understanding as they constantly monitor the students working independently and provide immediate and corrective feedback. For example, the students were working on an activity about *area*. The 3rd grade teacher provided an anchor chart for them to reference, provided examples about the concept of *area*. She defined *area* as the space inside a shape, guided the students to work collaboratively on an activity about *area*, and then assigned an independent activity about *area*. The activity was a foldable that the students would then glue to their journal to later reference if needed. In addition, for corrective feedback, the teachers at this campus implemented

Dr. Jean's affirmations (cheer to motivate students for doing a good job and/or answering correctly); I was fortunate to witness a 4th grade class engaged in the *firecracker* cheer for a student who got the right answer.

13. Students are allowed to speak in their native language when they do not know a vocabulary word in English. Although the district follows the early transition bilingual model, some of the students did respond in their native language and the teachers allowed it. For example, these fourth grade teachers used synonyms as part of writing and provided lists of synonyms that they referred to as *Mighty Words* on a bulletin board (word wall) for the students to use as a reference. During one of my visits, there was a student writing about a description and instead of using the word *tell*, the teacher referred him to the word wall of *Mighty Words*. As the student was searching for a *mightier* word, he used his cognate ability to determine what word to use. He selected the word *inform* because it is a true cognate for the word *informar* in Spanish.

Least effective strategies. Least Effective Strategies (#s 6, 8, & 12) were either not observed at all or evident only once. The only LES strategy that was observed one time in a 3rd grade classroom and one time in a 4th grade classroom was 6, which is: *Asking the students to look for the definition of the word in the dictionary and recording on journal or any type of writing paper.* The analysis of the classroom environment for the implementation of culturally responsive teaching will be analyzed in detail as Research Question 2 and is answered later in this chapter, as it is indicated as a special note below the table.

Artifacts collected during the classroom observations (HA1). The majority of the artifacts were collected from the bulletin boards that displayed student work; however, some of the artifacts were also collected from students completing an independent activity. Since I did not want to keep the actual student work as samples of artifacts for the study while gathering this data, digital photographs seemed most appropriate. The total number of artifacts collected from this participating campus was 60. All of the artifacts collected presented some type of vocabulary understanding from the 3rd to 5th grade students and reflected the vocabulary instructional procedures implemented.

In some instances, teachers displayed scaffolds about vocabulary knowledge for their students (e.g., a poster about context clues, what is a prefix?, what is a suffix?, etc.). In addition, the artifacts were closely related to the classroom observation being performed, and they assisted me in understanding more about the vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures being implemented at this campus.

For example, a 3rd grade teacher was teaching the concept of *area*. During the explanation of this term, she provided an anchor chart (visual), provided examples of *area*, and explained to her students why this concept was important. She also provided examples using the classroom (area of the teacher's desk, area for the library center, etc.), and then asked her students to create a foldable about what *area* is for them to reference later in the week while working independently.

Teacher interviews: 3rd – 5th grade teachers (HA1). All interviews took place in the classroom corresponding to the teacher being interviewed and the responses came

directly from them. Before the interviews, I assured the 3rd to 5th grade teachers that there was no right or wrong answer; they needed to respond to the best of their ability and knowledge. I also asked them to speak slowly since I was transcribing as they were speaking.

Doris and Jane (3rd Grade). During the interviews, Doris stated that she serves 14 ELLs, is very happy to be in the teaching field, and “wouldn’t change her career for any other.” Jane confirmed that she teaches 13 ELLs out of 16 students in her classroom. Both teachers stated that they “teach vocabulary every day through all the content areas.”

Furthermore, in their interviews, they confirmed that they both “follow the district scope and sequence,” but they do “enforce differentiation of instruction, especially for struggling students.” Some of the differentiations include the pacing of the lesson or objective—staying a little longer on a particular objective until the students learn it and providing visuals, examples, and non-examples for vocabulary words being taught.

When asked about their frustrations, Jane replied:

My frustration has to be not having enough time to do what I need to do, especially at the beginning of the year. I also need more training. Can you believe that within the last two years, I have only attended one training! The training was with the reading coordinator from the district and it was about novels. Although it was a great training that provided me with a binder full of activities like concept webs, it was not enough.

This is what Doris mentioned about her frustrations:

Time is my greatest pet peeve or frustration. I am frustrated that I don’t have enough time, and sometimes I wish I could extend the school day even more. We also don’t have enough training to teach our students better. I have attended

maybe 5 to 6 sessions on vocabulary within the last two years and I do integrate what I learn in these sessions into my lessons.

Both teachers informed me that campus administrators visit them on a weekly basis and that they feel very comfortable with that. They further added, “best of all, the students are comfortable when administration visits.” After administrators visit the classrooms, they provide the teachers with feedback about the visit, provide suggestions for improvement, identify the vocabulary procedures implemented, and encourage a lot more student talk, in order to promote vocabulary development.

Carla and Lizzy (4th grade). Carla teaches 16 ELLs out of 18 students in her classroom and she prides herself in “providing a risk-free environment” for her students. Carla allows her students to respond without raising their hands. She also feels that “sometimes teachers are very strict about this discipline (raising their hand before speaking) when we are trying to develop their language acquisition.” Lizzy, on the other hand, comes from an out-of-town district; she teaches 15 ELLs out of 20 students in her classroom and stated, “She provides vocabulary instruction daily because it is very important for her students.”

Both teachers follow the scope and sequence provided by the district; however, if they need to “re-teach a skill, they do, even if they fall a little behind.” They also stated that they “wished they had more time in the day to cover everything because they have so much to cover and not enough time to do everything.”

Their main worry is the 4th grade Writing STAAR assessment; and it is reflected in the following statement, “Students need to become proficient writers before they can pass such an exam.” After a follow-up call with these teachers about this question, they

added: “Proficient writing requires academic vocabulary; we implement the *Mighty Words* as part of our vocabulary procedures and encourage our students to put into practice the use of these words while writing responses, verbally, through their journals, essays, compositions, etc.”

Professional development sessions they both have attended include 18 hours within the present school year and during the past summer vacations. For accountability of implementation of such sessions, they are visited at least three times a month by their campus administrators.

Hugo and Clarissa (5th grade). Hugo is a 5th grade teacher at HA1 where 5th grade is departmentalized. He teaches mathematics to 57 ELLs out of approximately 70 or more students in the 5th grade; however, he works with a small group of ELLs (10) for the Student Success Initiative (SSI) in the area of reading. According to Hugo, he is “always looking for ways to enhance the curriculum of mathematics,” since teachers must follow the district scope and sequence. Hugo is also the pathfinder (teacher leader) for this grade level, and he enjoys guiding and leading his teammates because it is very important to him that all of the 5th grade students pass the STAAR test. Hugo stated: “If 5th grade students do not pass the Reading and Math STAAR assessments, they are not able to continue into the 6th grade.”

Clarissa described herself as “a reading teacher that provides instruction at her highest potential all the time for her 5th grade students” (70 or more in the grade level). She currently serves 57 ELLs and provides vocabulary instructional strategies every day, “because it is very important.” Hugo and Clarissa both follow the district scope and

sequence but “have the liberty to implement whatever strategy works with their students.” When asked about their frustrations, Hugo responded:

I am frustrated with the lack of the English language and the lack of support from home. Students have a need for vocabulary knowledge; parents have little or no education and they cannot assist their children at home. I worry a great deal about my students, and I really try to make up for this challenge or lack of support that is presented from the home environment. We have very little time to make this happen.

Clarissa claimed that she is frustrated because:

There is not enough time in the day for everything needed for my students to be successful. Some students are pulled out for other services (Special Ed., 504, GT, etc.) and the students also have many absences. Absenteeism really affects the students’ learning and all they need to be successful. When my students are absent, I call home to find out about their absence and how to help my students. I also make arrangements with my parents to pick up assignments so that my students don’t fall behind.

Hugo stated that he has not attended any professional development sessions dealing with vocabulary within the last two years; however, he is always “trying to see what is out there.” Clarissa has attended at least three sessions: two at her campus and one with the district, on summarization. For accountability, they affirmed, “their principal is always making sure they get what they need for instruction; he allows the teachers to meet with their peers, and they have time to plan regarding spiral tests and vocabulary development for their students.” Hugo stated that, “spiraling of tests is a way of activating prior knowledge for new concepts presented.”

High-Achieving Campus 2 (HA2): Principal Interview

Guadalupe (pseudonym), the first year principal at this campus, was “excited about the school year and the challenges it presents.” She allowed her teachers to “make the best instructional decisions necessary, when it came to vocabulary knowledge and

instructional procedures and strategies in order to accomplish student success based on the demographics and the students' needs.”

Guadalupe provided positive feedback to her teachers in writing and in person after the classroom observations, especially when they maximized the engagement of all learners. She added, “As the principal of this elementary campus, I encourage academic vocabulary all day, every day from the teachers and our students.”

Classroom observations for HA2: 3rd - 5th grade teachers. The findings in Table 4.2 identify the highly effective strategies that were mostly implemented by the teachers in the different grades and the least effective strategies that were used by a few of the teachers as part of their vocabulary instructional procedures for this campus. The two types of vocabulary strategies are explained under their respective headings.

Highly effective strategies. To be included as a highly effective strategy, the strategy needed to be observed as being implemented at least twice. Table 4.2 indicates that at least 67% of 3rd grade teachers were observed implementing highly effective strategies (HES) 1-5, 7; however, no more than 65% of them implemented highly effective strategies 9-11 and 13. On the other hand, 70% of the 4th grade teachers were observed implementing (HES) 1-5, 7; but they only implemented HES 9-11 and 13, 58% of the time. What is more striking is that no more than 58% of the 5th grade teachers were observed implementing these highly effective strategies (9-11, 13). The Classroom Observation Tool was the Vocabulary Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms and the Classroom Environment (See Appendix G) was from HA2 –Highly Effective Strategies (1-5, 7, 9-11, 13) scoring 2+ (Strong); Least Effective Strategies (6, 8, 12) scoring 1 or

2+. For LES scoring of 0% means that none were observed. Classroom Environment (1-9) scoring 2+ (Strong) are the only identified.

The following HES through vocabulary instructional procedures were observed at this campus and are described below for HA2:

Table 4.2

Classroom Observation for HA2

Vocabulary Instructional Procedures	HES: 1-5, 7 Score: 2+	HES: 9-11, 13 Score: 2+	LES: 6 Score: 0	LES: 8 Score: 0	LES: 12 Score: 0	C. Environment 1-9 Score: 2+
3 rd grade teachers	40/60= 67%	26/40= 65%	3/10= 30%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	50/90= 56%
4 th grade teachers	42/60= 70%	23/40= 58%	3/10= 30%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	55/90= 61%
5 th grade teachers	30/60= 50%	23/40= 58%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	1/10= 10%	44/90= 49%

Note. CRT will be analyzed as Research Question 2 and is answered later in the chapter.

1. Preparation for vocabulary instruction through a systematic approach (e.g., separating words into tiers, implementation of word maps, graphic organizers, providing student friendly definitions, synonyms, concept attainment, “mental anchors” with visuals, etc.). The 3rd grade teachers at this campus provided their students with the use of student-friendly definitions; for example, what is a student friendly definition for *process*? Students responded: to practice something, a way of doing a task. This teacher went further and reminded her students that she often uses the phrase “Let’s give ____ time to process.” Graphic organizers are also implemented by the teachers at this campus. Students use the graphic organizers to organize thoughts, brainstorm, and to assist them with comprehension. Fourth grade teachers also

implemented *mental anchors* to help their students create mental images when discussing definitions for vocabulary words. One of the 4th grade teachers explained to her students that *mental anchors* are “like previews of movies; they are images in your head that help you understand words, concepts and skills.”

2. Explicit instruction with modeling (activating/building background knowledge, making connections, word walls, semantic maps-before, during, and after reading, multiple encounters of the words are available for students, etc.). A 3rd grade teacher at this campus provided her students with multiple encounters of the vocabulary words of the week. For example, while reading the novel, *The Family under the Bridge*, the teacher questioned the students as follows: “How did the kids react in the story?” Student 1 responded: “They were friendly towards Armand”; Student 2 replied: “he was not friendly at first”; Student 3 answered: “they were disappointed.” Teacher asked: “Can you extend on that?” Student 1 responded: “they wanted to help Armand and to be his family.” Student 2 responded: “They were not motivated.” Teacher: “Have you ever felt unmotivated?” Student 2: “Yes.” Teacher: “Then did something change your outlook, your perspective?” Student 2: “Yes, at first I was not motivated to play soccer, but then I watched a game on TV with my dad and my perspective about soccer changed.” Teacher: “Great!” In addition, teachers provided vocabulary words on the word wall, with a visual and many synonyms. Students knew that the word walls were provided as scaffolds and a set procedure for them to implement. While the students worked independently in their journals, I could see that they would refer to the word wall in order to apply the vocabulary words learned.

3. Assessing student's current knowledge level of the target lesson

vocabulary words (vocabulary foldables, webs, visuals, etc.) created by students (student artifacts). The 4th grade teachers at this campus assessed the vocabulary knowledge of the students by asking them to complete vocabulary foldables where they had to record a student friendly definition of the vocabulary words. One of the 4th grade teachers in particular used *Claymation* (creating different scenes of a novel with clay, taking digital pictures, then uploading them as a PowerPoint presentation) as part of the projects the students created based on the novels they had read. One group of students created a Claymation of the novel *Holes*; another group created a Claymation of the novel *Esperanza Rising*; and the third group created their Claymation of the novel *The Witches*. The presentation of these Claymations allowed the students to express themselves in front of an audience, implement the vocabulary words from the novels while presenting, and allowed them to develop creativity.

4. Prompting students to assume an active role (e.g., listening responding, taking notes on journal, providing examples or non-examples) during instruction of new vocabulary terms. The 5th grade teachers at this campus implemented presentations of projects. I was able to see students in action while presenting some science projects. The students presented and responded to questions posed by their fellow peers. The use of presentations helps develop students' oral language, which leads to vocabulary knowledge.

5. Allowing the students to read independently through novels, basal stories, and/or informational texts at their instructional level. The 3rd, 4th, and 5th

grade teachers at this campus are required to read novels on a weekly basis with their students as part of the campus vocabulary procedures. This is an initiative at this campus in order to improve vocabulary knowledge, accomplish comprehension, and attain success on state assessments. Referencing back to the *Claymations* of the novel *Esperanza Rising*, one of the students clearly connected with this story, since she was from Aguascalientes, Mexico—just like the character from the novel. Furthermore, I could hear her express her pride to another student while she identified the Spanish words in the story and explained those words to her friend.

7. Pronouncing new words clearly and prompting students to repeat the words chorally, maximizing engagement; engagement of students with student-friendly definitions and classroom discussions. The 5th grade teachers at HA2 asked students to engage in classroom discussions, especially during the presentation of the different projects. Students already had a routine established and were able to take turns during the discussions. They clearly understood that first they had to listen to the presentation and then ask questions to the presenter, wait for the response, and then agree or disagree with the presenter.

9. Students are provided with opportunities to use vocabulary words in context through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. During one of my classroom observations, a 3rd grade teacher at this campus was introducing the concept: *Life Cycle of a Moth*. First, she introduced the vocabulary, i.e., *metamorphosis*, *larva*, *pupa*, etc. The students listened to the words, repeated the words with the teacher, and then they read a passage—*The difference between a moth and a butterfly*. After they read

the passage, they answered some questions with the teacher. The teacher then asked them to reflect about the story in the passage and to determine which insect was their favorite, the moth or the butterfly. She also encouraged her students to integrate the new vocabulary words into their writing.

10. Providing a note-taking scaffold for less proficient readers and English language learners. The teachers at this campus provided their students with student friendly definitions and a visual for the vocabulary words being introduced. For example, for the story *The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane*, this 4th grade teacher provided the following vocabulary words with the following definitions: *jaunty*—lively or self-confident; *specimen*—example or type; *unsavory*—disagreeable or distasteful; *duration*—length of time; *china*—ceramic material usually used to make plates; and *implications*—suggestions. After reviewing the vocabulary words, the students copied the student friendly definition for each word in the reading journal and drew a picture next to that vocabulary word. The teacher reminded the students that this note-taking strategy was very useful as they prepared to read the story and in order to understand it better.

11. Checking for understanding with a concrete task/question that requires critical thinking/immediate and corrective feedback from the teacher. The 3rd grade teachers at this campus implemented higher order thinking questions as part of the vocabulary procedures. For example, when questioning her 3rd grade students, the teacher used words such as *elaborate* (Can you elaborate a little bit more?); *extend* (Can you extend on that?); *perspective* (What is another perspective?); *eager* (Alejandro, you

seem very eager to respond to the question, tell me?); *attentive* (I want to see good attentive listeners.); *entail* and *expression* (What does that expression entail?); *discombobulated* (I feel discombobulated, please refrain from this behavior, come back and focus on the lesson). When the teacher mentioned the word *discombobulated*, I really didn't think the students knew the meaning; to my surprise, the students apologized and promised to listen more attentively. In their exact words: "We apologize teacher for making you feel this way, we will now listen more attentively."

13. Students are allowed to speak in their Native language when they do not know a vocabulary word in English. This particular instructional practice was not very evident at this campus. In fact, students in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades who participated in this study were already transitioned into an all-English classroom. There was one exception, a 4th grade student, David, who was a recent immigrant in this classroom and the language that he knew was Spanish. The 4th grade teacher would bring him to her table and explain the concepts in the Spanish language. While I was observing the class, David seemed very confident and some of his peers assisted him by translating to the Spanish language, during the collaborative assignments.

Least effective strategies. With respect to the least effective strategies (LES) 6, 8, and 12, only 3rd and 4th grade teachers were observed implementing LES 6 for only 30% of the time. Since strategies 6, 8, and 12 are classified as being least effective, their rate of implementation should be low because of their lack of effectiveness. The analysis of the classroom environment for the implementation of culturally responsive teaching will be analyzed in detail as Research Question 2 and is answered later in this chapter.

Artifacts collected during the classroom observations (HA2). The number of artifacts collected from this participating campus was 79. All of the artifacts collected presented some type of vocabulary understanding from the students; in many instances, teachers displayed scaffolds about vocabulary knowledge and instruction for their students (e.g., a poster about the different genres, comprehension strategies, synonyms, etc.).

In addition, the artifacts were closely related to the classroom observation being performed, and they assisted me in understanding more about the vocabulary instructional procedures being implemented. As mentioned before, some of the artifacts included science project presentations, Claymation presentations of novels, and visuals related to the different content areas. Moreover, all of the classrooms observed at this campus had a classroom library with different genres for the students to access. The classroom libraries provided the different genres of books, and accompanying activities were prepared for students to complete. For example, in one of the classrooms, the teacher provided a graphic organizer for the students to complete before reading the story, during reading, and after reading. She provided sentence starters for the students and encouraged them to write using *powerful sentences*, as a way of developing their vocabularies and as one of her vocabulary instructional procedures. *Powerful sentences* are those with seven words or more.

Teacher interviews: 3rd -5th grade teachers (HA2). The following data are reported:

Angelina and Marissa (3rd grade). Angelina teaches 7 ELLs out of 18 students in her classroom and “teaches vocabulary all day and every day.” Marissa teaches 5 ELLs out of 17 students in her classroom, and her instructional delivery “includes motivation, being very energetic and positive, and always encouraging her students to do better.” Both follow the district scope and sequence, but “they like to extend on what the district provides.” As per Marissa, “Sometimes the lessons are very basic; so we extend and make it better for our students; and although in the roster I have 5 ELLs, when I am teaching, all students are my students.” When asked about their frustrations, Angelina responded:

I love teaching, but my greatest frustration is teaching to a test and not having enough time to teach about the real world and about real problems. These limitations are not good for our students, but our school is rated by how well they do on the STAAR test. In my opinion, one test does not measure the amount of learning and knowledge our students have. I speak about my ELLs, 504, Special Ed., and Gifted and Talented students.

This is what Marissa stated about her frustrations:

I really do not have any frustrations; my goal is for my students to become critical thinkers. So really focusing on their prior knowledge and assisting them in becoming critical thinkers also helps them in their state assessments. I enjoy challenging my students by always integrating academic vocabulary into every lesson. I become very satisfied when my students embrace the academic vocabulary words I implement and they actually sound like me. High-expectations is what I hold in my classroom. Failure is not an option!

Within the last two years, both teachers have attended at least 12 hours of professional development sessions; at least 6 hours have been specific to vocabulary development. For accountability, they analyze scores of benchmarks, CBAs (Content-based assessments) and AR (Accelerated Reading) levels; they clearly state that, “all assessments require vocabulary understanding to achieve comprehension.” In order to

activate and build prior knowledge, they implement new strategies learned, and during classroom discussions and presentations, vocabulary words are implemented. Marissa added, “The more they use the words, the more they become part of their speaking and writing vocabularies.” Angelina stated, “During all the subjects, the students are accountable to expand and use the new vocabulary words.”

Sylvia and Sonia (4th grade). Sylvia has been teaching for 10 years and all at the present campus; Sonia has been teaching for 13 years with 11 of those years at her present campus. Sylvia serves 10 ELLs in her classroom and “is more of a facilitator by encouraging her students to be more independent.” Sonia, on the other hand, teaches 3 ELLs in her classroom and is proud to provide “consistency and structure through routines and high expectations.”

Sonia stated that the bilingual program the district follows is an Early-Exit Transitional program; therefore, by the time the ELLs get to the 4th grade, most of them have successfully exited the ELL status. She added, “a lot of the vocabulary I teach through novels and that’s how we explore more of the vocabulary; we also use the vocabulary words daily.”

Concerning the curriculum, Sylvia and Sonia follow the district scope and sequence. Sonia stated, “It also depends on the needs of each student or on the needs of the group as well.”

I like the structure of it, and that it helps me keep a good pace. It also allows me to keep track of where I am supposed to be. So following it, gives me timelines and a structure of where my students are supposed to be at.

The frustrations for Sylvia are:

That the ELL students struggle in reading altogether and even keeping them afterschool for tutorials is sometimes not enough. Because reading is very difficult and at times students come very low from the previous year, we sometimes have to make-up on the instruction before we move to a different skill. If we don't review with our students, it makes our job a lot more difficult and the students become frustrated. This applies to all students, not just the ELLs. Another factor is when they come from homes where only Spanish is spoken, that doesn't help much. Because we are developing the English language; therefore, if parents don't speak English, students don't practice it, and they take longer to transition.

Sonia claimed that time management is her frustration, "not having enough time to cover everything needed for the students to be successful." When asked how many professional development sessions dealing with vocabulary instruction or teaching vocabulary they have attended within the last two years, Sonia responded "about 3 sessions a year." Sylvia replied that with "the district, 2 sessions this year and 2 sessions last year."

When asked how they are accountable for the implementation of such professional development training, Sonia stated "through walkthroughs and when administrators come in, they want to see some of the strategies implemented." Sylvia stated, "My administrators often perform walkthroughs and expect the implementation of vocabulary strategies."

Aime and Nina (5th grade). Aime is a 5th grade teacher with 21 years in education; she is an experienced teacher with seven years at HA2. She teaches 3 ELLs out of 17 students; however, 99% of her students are of Hispanic descent, and she added that "over time, she has learned to use new and old strategies to find what works best for the students." Nina, also a 5th grade teacher, described herself as "being excited about learning and teaching new materials." Nina has been teaching for 17 years and all of

these years at the present campus. She currently teaches 5 ELLs out of 18 students and at times, “she accepts responses in Spanish and then provides the students with the English terms which can assist them in developing the language.”

Both Aime and Nina know that the number of ELLs decreases over the years as the district implements an Early-Exit Transitional program and most ELLs exit the status of LEP (Limited English Proficient) by the 5th grade. Concerning the curriculum, both Aime and Nina follow the district scope and sequence, but “are allowed to deviate from it when there is a need to re-teach or expand on the learning.”

When asked about any frustrations, Aime claimed: “That with the timeline of the scope and sequence provided, there is no lee way and that is why she is frustrated; as a teacher we must be provided with time to re-teach and review.” Nina confirmed that “they don’t have enough time; not only in school but life itself.” She added that many times they also act as counselors providing their students with confidence in order to be more successful.

With respect to professional development sessions attended within the last two years, Aime mentioned about 21 hours (6 hours in vocabulary), and Nina reported none in vocabulary within the last two years. Concerning accountability, Aime stated, “We are accountable because the students need to learn the skills necessary to be successful.” Nina claims that accountability is “how the 5th grade students perform on STAAR.”

Low-Achieving Campus (LA): Principal Interview

Petra (pseudonym), the first year principal at this campus, claimed that her teachers “follow the scope and sequence based on the student’s needs.” Furthermore, she

allows her teachers to “make modifications to the curriculum and the schedules as needed.” She is a strong believer in progress monitoring as a form of accountability. The monitoring is based on baselines set at the beginning of the year that are driven by data. This progress monitoring entails monitoring every two weeks for the literacy levels of the students to increase and monitoring vocabulary instructional strategies through classroom walkthroughs. She gives credit to her past principal who was a firm believer in progress monitoring and how it leads to student success.

Petra is an ELL herself and understands the importance of vocabulary knowledge and development for her ELLs. District initiatives that Petra embraces for the development of vocabulary at her campus are the Reading Fairs. This is where students are asked to select a book of their choice and create a tri-fold (reading board) describing the characters, setting, main event, problem, and resolution. Since Petra understands that oral language development leads to vocabulary knowledge, she has the students present their reading boards and encourages the teachers to ask extended questions about the book being presented. Her goal is to “drive this campus into academic success for all stakeholders.”

Classroom observations for LA: 3rd - 5th grade teachers. The findings in Table 4.3 identify the highly effective strategies that were mostly implemented by the teachers in the different grades and the least effective strategies that were used by a few of the teachers as part of their vocabulary instructional procedures for this campus. The two types of vocabulary strategies are explained under their respective headings. The Classroom Observation Tool was Vocabulary Instruction in Mixed-Ability Classrooms

and the Classroom Environment (See Appendix G) was from LA –Highly Effective Strategies (1-5, 7, 9-11, 13) scoring 2+ (Strong); Least Effective Strategies (6, 8, 12) scoring 1 or 2+. For LES scoring of 0% means that none were observed. Classroom Environment (1-9) scoring 2+ (Strong) are the only identified.

Table 4.3

Classroom Observation for LA

Vocabulary Instructional Procedures	HES: 1-5, 7 Score: 2+	HES: 9-11, 13 Score: 2+	LES: 6 Score: 0	LES: 8 Score: 0	LES: 12 Score: 0	C. Environment 1-9 Score: 2+
3 rd grade teachers	32/60= 53%	29/40= 73%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	66/90= 73%
4 th grade teachers	34/60= 57%	31/40= 78%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	74/90= 82%
5 th grade teachers	29/60= 40%	18/40= 45%	0/10= 0%	0/10= 0%	1/10= 10%	57/90= 63%

Note. CRT will be analyzed as Research Question 2 and is answered later in the chapter.

Highly effective strategies. Data in Table 4.3 identify the vocabulary instructional practices that were mostly implemented by the teachers in the different grade levels at this campus. The Highly Effective Strategies (HES) 1-5 and 7 were implemented with the highest percentage by the 4th grade teachers from this campus. These teachers also exhibited the highest rate (82%) of culturally responsive classroom environment. With respect to the least effective strategies (LES 6, 8, and 12), the only strategy implemented was 12 by 5th grade teachers 10% of the time.

The following are examples of HES and vocabulary instructional procedures found at LA:

1. Preparation for vocabulary instruction through a systematic approach e.g., separating of words into tiers, implementation of word maps, graphic organizers, providing student friendly definitions, synonyms, concept attainment, “mental anchors” with visuals, etc.). The 3rd grade teachers at this campus provided their students with the use of visuals and graphic organizers; for example, the students were learning about the water cycle and so the teacher provided a visual of the water cycle, explained the process of the reproduction of water (evaporation, condensation, and precipitation), and modeled for her students content specific vocabulary for them to learn and implement during their completion of projects. Graphic organizers were also implemented by the teachers at this campus. Students used the graphic organizers to assist them in the learning of vocabulary. One particular graphic organizer often integrated in the classrooms at this campus was the *Writing Web*. For example, the students were asked to web the title of the story they were reading. They were also asked to web different attributes of a character in the story they were reading about. During these activities, teachers reminded their students to implement the academic vocabulary learned in order to receive a better grade.

2. Explicit instruction with modeling (activating/building background knowledge, making connections, word walls, semantic maps-before, during, and after reading, multiple encounters of the words are available for students, etc.). The 4th grade teachers at this campus implemented the strategy of making connections. For example, while discussing the vocabulary words of the week, the students came across the word *emerge*. During the explanation of the word, the 4th grade teacher provided a

student friendly definition like, coming out, popping up, etc. Then, all of a sudden, a student said: “Oh yes, like the *Walking Dead*; the zombies *emerge* from the house.” Teacher responded: “Yes, they all of a sudden came out; exactly! And why are you watching that show?” Student responded: “I watch it every Sunday with my mom; it’s cool.” Teacher responded: “Great way of making connections to our world.”

3. Assessing student’s current knowledge level of the target lesson vocabulary words (vocabulary foldables, webs, visuals, etc.) created by students (student artifacts). The 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers at this campus assessed the vocabulary knowledge of the students by asking them to record journal entries implementing the vocabulary words learned. After completing the entries, the teachers provided immediate feedback and if needed, they encouraged their students to express themselves in their writing and to apply the vocabulary words learned. One of the 4th grade teachers, in particular, had this quote on his bulletin board: “*Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don’t matter, and those who matter don’t mind.*”—*Dr. Seuss*. As the students completed their journals, the teacher would refer them to the quote and further reminded them to take risks. This particular teacher tried to check the journal entries on the same day and, if not possible, by Friday.

4. Prompting students to assume an active role (e.g., listening, responding, taking notes on journal, providing examples or non-examples) during instruction of new vocabulary terms. The 5th grade teachers at this campus implemented the internet application *Quizlet* with the vocabulary words of the week. This application allowed the students and the teachers to engage in learning games about the vocabulary words being

presented. Part of the game allowed the students to assume an active role while responding to the questions. The game actually reminded me of *Family Feud* in a sense, because of the turn-taking strategy and the teams. “Competition is very important for 5th graders, especially when the teams are divided between boys and girls,” Melissa said.

5. Allowing the students to read independently through novels, basal stories, and/or informational texts at their instructional level. Teachers at this campus seldom provided opportunities for the students to read independently. During my classroom observations at LA, I was able to view one 4th grade teacher providing her students time to read independently the basal story of the week. Because of the minutes I was in the classrooms for the observations, I did not see any other vocabulary strategy in this 4th grade classroom.

7. Pronouncing new words clearly and prompting students to repeat the words chorally, maximizing engagement; engagement of students with student-friendly definitions and classroom discussions. The 3rd and 4th grade teachers at LA asked students to chorally read passages, basal stories, etc. This procedure was done in an effort to maximize the engagement of every child and to improve the prosody and intonation of words while reading.

9. Students are provided with opportunities to use vocabulary words in context through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A 5th grade teacher at this campus comes to mind when writing about this highly effective strategy. He was teaching his students words in context about mathematics. For example, he was teaching the skill of *alignment* and described this word as *putting numbers in line*. A student

responded: like a number line? Teacher: Yes, that is correct! Then the class proceeded to reading a word problem about the concept of *alignment*. The word problems were read chorally; students were then allowed to ask for assistance from their neighbor, and finally they all shared their answers.

10. Providing a note-taking scaffold for less proficient readers and English language learners. Teachers at this campus implemented this note-taking scaffold within the journal entries. A 3rd grade teacher asked her students to take out their language arts journal because they were going to brainstorm synonyms together. I was able to observe the students' brainstorming and recording for the word *big*. The following are responses the students mentioned and recorded in their journal: *gigantic, huge, hefty, astronomical, and enormous*.

11. Checking for understanding with a concrete task/question that requires critical thinking/immediate and corrective feedback from the teacher. The 4th grade teachers from this campus did an outstanding job with the lessons about *transitional words* during writing compositions. For example, the students were provided with an anchor chart with the different types of *transitional words* to use when writing about a sequence of events: *before, during, finally, at the start, first of all, then, next, meanwhile, subsequently, to begin, etc.* They were also provided with *transitional words* to write about time (*until, today, tomorrow, as soon as*), to compare (*in the same way, likewise, similar to*), to contrast (*whereas, instead of, unlike, although, on the other hand, even though, however, yet*), and to add information (*again, also, and, for example, another, for instance, as well, along with, furthermore*). The students were provided with a

prompt from their teacher and were asked to write their composition implementing the transitional words of their choice. The teacher monitored their writing and provided immediate feedback as the students submitted their drafts.

13. Students are allowed to speak in their Native language when they do not know a vocabulary word in English. Teachers at this campus take advantage of the Latin roots of words and use of cognates. For example, during the classroom observations performed with the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade teachers, there was at least one instance of use of cognates in one of the classrooms. Cognate words in a 5th grade math class: identify—*identificar*, probability—*probabilidad*, reasonable prediction—*predicción razonable*, and total—*total*. Cognate words in a 4th grade language arts class: important—*importante*, moment—*momento*, fantastic—*fantastico*, novel—*novela*, contrast—*contraste*, cause—*causa*, conclude—*concluir*, and appreciate—*apreciar*. Cognate words in a 3rd grade science class: cycle—*ciclo*, evaporation—*evaporación*, precipitation—*precipitación*, condensation—*condensación*, vapor—*vapor*, gas—*gas* and liquid—*líquido*.

Least effective strategies. Least Effective Strategies (6, 8, and 12) were either not observed at all or evident only once. The only LES strategy that was observed one time in a 5th grade classroom was 12, which is: *Providing students with a list of vocabulary and spelling words to study for a test at the end of the week*. The analysis of the classroom environment for the implementation of culturally responsive teaching will be analyzed in detail as Research Question 2 and is answered later in this chapter, as it is indicated as a special note below the table.

Artifacts collected during the classroom observations (LA). The total number of artifacts collected from this participating campus was 65. All of the artifacts collected presented some type of vocabulary understanding from the students; in many instances, teachers displayed scaffolds about vocabulary knowledge and vocabulary instructional procedures for their students through a word wall, journal entries, graphic organizers, and lesson plans with specific vocabulary words to be taught, *Mighty Words* with visuals, etc.

In addition, the artifacts were closely related to the classroom observation being performed and they assisted me in understanding more about the vocabulary instructional strategies being implemented. The number of artifacts collected was a representation of the vocabulary instructional procedures that were being implemented by the teachers during the time of the study and the collection of data. Some of the artifacts included visuals of the water cycle, writing webs about the characters, anchor charts of transitional words, and the implementation of journals, all to enhance the development of vocabulary.

Teacher interviews: 3rd -5th grade teachers (LA). During interviews, teachers from LA reported the following:

Nancy and Katrina (3rd grade). Nancy teaches 18 ELLs out of 22 students in her classroom and “makes her lessons exciting and entertaining, where the kids are not just repeating the vocabulary words, but are actually engaged.” Katrina teaches 14 ELLs out of the 18 students in her classroom, and she takes pride in her instructional delivery because she is “also an English language learner, and together with her students, they

over analyze every word, learn more words and language together, making learning fun and easy.” In addition, Katrina and her students “implement technology and the internet (Google) to explore the meaning of new words.”

During one of my visits, the students were working on the creation of water cycle illustrations for their science journal. While the teacher explained the water cycle, one of the students asked, “What exactly is condensation?” The teacher responded: “Let’s Google it!” The teacher performed a Google search for an image, so that the students could see it; then she requested a *student friendly definition* of the word, this is what she got: *The process by which gas cools and becomes a liquid.* With respect to the curriculum, both teachers stated that they follow the district’s scope and sequence; however, “they can make decisions on how to best deliver a lesson in the classroom.”

Nancy and Katrina shared different views when asked about frustrations. Nancy claimed that “there is not enough parental support from home and that the transition program is not very effective.” She added, “It may be too late to transition to English in 2nd grade, so when they get to 3rd grade, it becomes very difficult to do everything in English.” The bilingual program offered at the district is the Early Transition program; therefore, students are more than likely to transition by the end of 1st grade or middle of 2nd grade; especially students who have been in the district since Pre-Kindergarten. Katrina stated, “some students give up too soon when learning new words.” You can even say that even parents give up too soon too, especially when they say ‘*es que no quiere maestra.*’ – ‘*they don’t want to do it teacher.*’ “The kids are basically on their own when learning, with very little support from home,” says Katrina.

Nancy and Katrina both claimed that there is a need for more professional development sessions about vocabulary. When providing feedback about professional development sessions, Nancy stated, “We need vocabulary training.” Both have participated in less than 6 hours of training/sessions within the last two years and none dealt with vocabulary development. They added, “All trainings provided mostly dealt with STAAR, and strategies to do well on this test.”

With respect to accountability, they affirmed that putting the training into practice is the expectation, “The main reason we get trained is to come back into the classroom and implement the new techniques.” They both stated that they get frequent visits from administration and Nancy further confirmed this by saying, “Now it’s different with our new principal; it’s all getting better.”

Liza and Juan (4th grade). Liza has been teaching for 5 years and all at the present campus; Juan has been teaching for 9 years with 8 of those years at his present campus. Liza serves 17 ELLs out of 22 students in her classroom. Liza added, “I provide my students with a safe, nurturing environment. Even if students respond incorrectly, their responses are accepted, too.” Juan teaches 16 ELLs out of 21 students in his classroom and teaches with excitement. Juan added that as a youngster, he wanted, “To become a pediatrician but because of financial reasons, he did not; however, he loves to be a 4th grade teacher.” He is motivating to his students and tells them “not to limit themselves and to get scholarships to better educate themselves.” He added, ‘*No le hecho mucha crema a los tacos*’ (another way of saying I’m not exaggerating) –that’s just being me! I teach like this every day, all year long.” Both Liza and Juan follow a

prescribed curriculum with the scope and sequence from the district, but are empowered to teach to meet the students' needs. Juan adds, "Our new principal is leading us to academic success."

The frustrations for Liza are,

Within the subject of math. I am frustrated with the math scopes (district scope and sequence) and the way they (district personnel) are expecting our students to meet the required objectives. Some of the activities need to be a little more updated.

For example, "The integration of technology with iPads, we need more applications to keep our students engaged." On the other hand, Juan expressed no frustrations and briefly stated, "I'm OK!"

Concerning professional development training, both agreed that there is a lack of professional development in general. Juan stated that he has about 12 hours of training, but not necessarily in vocabulary. Liza mentioned in her response, "Now it's more about STAAR," but that when she was teaching in the lower grades, "the sessions were provided on language development and vocabulary."

When asked how they are accountable for teaching, both teachers responded that they are held accountable by school administration with very frequent classroom visits. Juan mentioned, "I am very pleased with our new principal. She has made many changes for the best of our campus and the children that we service."

Melissa and Samuel (5th grade). Melissa with 10 years in education is an experienced teacher with 7 years at LA. She teaches 60 ELLs because they are departmentalized, and she is the Language Arts/Reading 5th grade teacher at her campus. She added "new vocabulary words can be learned by making connections of [*sic*] the

words they know in their native language, sometimes all they need is the English term.”

Samuel has been teaching for 13 years and two of these at the present campus. He currently teaches 60 ELLs for mathematics, as they are departmentalized at his campus for the 5th grade. Samuel teaches vocabulary “every day, all day, and as many times as possible.” He added that he “even spirals the words and takes advantage of every teachable moment from the lessons being taught.”

Both teachers agreed that they follow a prescribed curriculum through the district’s scope and sequence, but they are empowered to “tweak it” to meet the needs of their students. Samuel added:

My principal gives me the power to implement other resources. Before in TAKS, they would ask questions in *combination*; now in STAAR, it is tested as *possible outcomes*; the kids get confused. It is important for us as professionals to know where our kids are at. Studying the data makes me make better decisions instructionally, for my kids.

Frustrations for Samuel are:

All the paperwork I must complete as a pathfinder (team leader). There are too many deadlines for paperwork and not enough time to teach. We need to keep in mind that we are in the frontline, and we get labeled on how our kids perform. I get it, lesson plans are necessary, but other paperwork could probably be reduced. Another frustration for me would have to be interruptions. For example, last week we tested TELPAS (Texas English Language Proficiency Assessment System); this week, middle school registration for the kids. There is no need to interrupt instruction. Because of the interruptions, there is no consistency; not only here, but in general. As teachers, we need to teach; the more we teach, the more the kids will learn. My priority is the instruction and the success of our kids. If our kids do not pass STAAR, they are not college ready. I am a big advocate for kid’s success and my number one goal is to service the kids to the fullest.

For Melissa her frustrations have to do with the CBAs (Content-based assessments) “not teaching the skills the students’ need for the CBAs and their scores

being low; that is my biggest frustration.” According to both teachers, they have received, maybe one training over the past two years on vocabulary instruction, but they do implement vocabulary strategies. Melissa and Samuel are both held accountable by frequent visits from their campus administrators.

“Accountability and responsibility in this campus are very important for their principal,” according to Samuel and Melissa. Samuel adds that he is also responsible to “train teachers from his campus on best math homework to assign to students.” He added, “I service teachers when they come over with questions about how to teach a certain skill. These are teachers with a passion for education, your next Teacher of the Year, they look up to me. I also train teachers on how to read data and use data to make the best educational decisions, so that the kids can be successful.”

Interpretations of the Findings for the Research Questions

Research Question 1

What are the vocabulary instructional procedures identified for the classroom observations, the student artifacts, and the teacher interviews in the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?

All of the three campuses provided vocabulary instructional procedures to their students; however, the vocabulary strategies to achieve these procedures were not at the highest or strongest levels. If we refer back to the tables (4.1, 4.2, and 4.3), which represent the classroom observations and the percent of instances to which Highly Effective Strategies 1-5, 7 were implemented at least twice (*Strong* (2+), the percentages are very low. The campus and grade level with the highest percentage for implementing

HES 1-5, 7 was HA2—4th grade teachers with a frequency of 70% of the time; the lowest occurrence (40%) of these HES (1-5, 7) was noted among the 5th grade teachers from the LA campus. These HES (teacher-centered) consists of:

1. Preparation for vocabulary instruction through a systematic approach, e.g., separating of words into tiers, implementation of word maps, graphic organizers, providing student friendly definitions, synonyms, concept attainment, “mental anchors” with visuals, etc.).
2. Explicit instruction with modeling (activating/building background knowledge, making connections, word walls, semantic maps-before, during, and after reading, multiple encounters of the words are available for students, etc.).
3. Assessing student’s current knowledge level of the target lesson vocabulary words (vocabulary foldables, webs, visuals, etc.) created by students (student artifacts).
4. Prompting students to assume an active role (e.g., listening, responding, taking notes in journal, providing examples or non-examples) during instruction of new vocabulary terms.
5. Allowing the students to read independently through novels, basal stories, and/or informational texts at their instructional level.
7. Pronouncing new words clearly and prompting students to repeat the words chorally, maximizing engagement; engagement of students with student-friendly definitions and classroom discussions.

Also contained in the tables are the observation data about the strong (2+) implementation of HES 9-11, and 13. These student-centered strategies include:

9. Students are provided with opportunities to use vocabulary words in context through listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
10. Providing a note-taking scaffold for less proficient readers and English language learners.
11. Checking for understanding with a concrete task/question that requires critical thinking/immediate and corrective feedback from the teacher.
13. Students are allowed to speak in their Native language when they do not know a vocabulary word in English.

The 4th grade teachers from the LA campus exhibited the highest rate of implementation of these strategies (78%). They were followed by the 3rd grade teachers from this campus (73%). The 5th grade teachers from HA1 and LA campuses each exhibited a 45% implementation rate.

August and her colleagues (2005) suggested several strategies that are especially valuable for building the vocabularies of ELLs. These strategies are identified as cognate implementation, learning the meaning of basic words, and review and reinforcement of words through read-alouds, teacher-directed activities, listening to audiotapes, and activities to extend word use outside of the classroom.

In reference to the student artifacts that were collected through digital photographs, these were based on the availability in every classroom as part of the evidence collected for the vocabulary instructional procedures implemented at the time

of the classroom observations. For HA1, 60 student artifacts were collected, for HA2, 79 student artifacts were collected, and for LA, 65 student artifacts were collected. Because HA2 campus had the highest number of student artifacts collected, I would like to reiterate my interpretation about this campus and the topic. The student artifacts collected at this campus were closely related to the classroom observations being performed, and they assisted me in understanding better the vocabulary instructional procedures being implemented. Many student presentations took place at this campus within the subject of science and students were able to express themselves with the academic vocabulary acquired pertaining to the content. Claymation presentations of novels and visuals related to the different content areas were also very evident at this campus as a vocabulary instructional procedure. Moreover, all of the classrooms observed at this campus had a classroom library with different genres for the students to access. The classroom libraries provided the different genres of books, and accompanying activities were prepared for students to complete in order to monitor their comprehension and vocabulary acquired. According to Neuman (1999), teachers can promote better reading performance by reading to children daily and by having students interact with books through the extensive use of classroom libraries. A study by Anderson and Nagy (1992) found that children learn an average of 4,000 to 12,000 new vocabulary words each year because of book reading.

During the teacher interviews, the findings revealed that at all of the participating campuses and teachers interviewed followed the district scope and sequence; however, they would make modifications as needed for their ELLs. For example the 3rd grade

teachers from HA1 (Doris and Jane) stated in their teacher interview that they both follow the district scope and sequence, but they do differentiate instruction, especially for struggling students (e.g., pacing of the lesson is adjusted according to mastery, providing visuals, and examples for vocabulary words being taught).

The 5th grade teachers from LA (Melissa and Samuel) stated that they follow a prescribed curriculum through the district's scope and sequence, but they are empowered to "tweak it" to meet the needs of their students. Most of the teachers, with the exception of one, reported a sense of frustration. As Samuel from LA replied, "there are too many deadlines for paperwork and not enough time to teach." All of the teachers interviewed reported a lack of professional development pertaining to vocabulary knowledge and strategies to help them facilitate their students' vocabulary development.

Research Question 2

Is there evidence of culturally responsive teaching among the two-high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?

The evidence gathered from the observations, artifacts, and teacher interviews will assist in answering Research Question 2 regarding culturally responsive teaching; it also presents the triangulation of data. The data are presented as they pertain to HA1, HA2, and LA campuses.

High-achieving campus 1 (HA1). The classroom environment for the implementation of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) for HA1 was recorded in Table 4.1, and it was based on the classroom observations conducted. CRT serves as a means to address the cultural knowledge, prior knowledge experiences, and performance styles

of diverse students in order to make learning more effective (Gay, 2000). CRT also allows teachers to teach through the strengths of the students (Gay, 2000). The incidence of CRT observed in descending order depicted practices utilized by 4th grade teachers (66%), 3rd grade teachers (58%), and 5th grade teachers (46%). These data suggest that the 4th grade teachers from HA1 most often communicated high expectations for the students by displaying respect and providing positive reinforcement. These teachers also served as facilitators within the learning environment, and their students had numerous opportunities to develop a sense of independence and problem-solving abilities.

The CRT classroom environments at HA1 exhibited an immense amount of student interaction. This was very good noise to hear because students were able to problem solve when they did not know an answer or when they were experiencing difficulty making sense of a word; they would also refer to their *Mighty Words* wall. While I visited the classrooms at HA1, I could not differentiate between ELLs, Special Education students, and/or Gifted and Talented students, since the academic vocabulary words used by the students indicated that the more they practiced a word, the faster it became part of their vocabularies.

The teachers from HA1 provided resources (e.g., internet-Google, thesaurus, dictionary, etc.) and reminded the students about the scaffolds posted around the room. I clearly remember a poster of one of the 3rd grade teachers that was displayed in her classroom titled *Making Inferences*. She described inferencing as: *when you figure something out using clues and what you already know . . .* She also stated that for inferencing, you have *text clues (clues the author gives you)* and *background knowledge*

(*what you already know*). The classrooms were print-rich and resource-rich; students and teachers also displayed positive learning relationships.

Teacher interviews: 3rd -5th grade teachers (HA1). During interviews, this is what the teachers from HA1 responded regarding their understanding of CRT:

Doris and Jane (3rd Grade). Both teachers knew CRT had something to do with the culture of the students and how it plays a role in the learning. They added that they both understood it had to do with the needs and culture of their students, and they knew that providing respect for their students' beliefs was culturally responsive.

Carla and Lizzy (4th Grade). The 4th grade teachers responded that they were not very familiar with the model of culturally responsive teaching. Lizzy responded: "Would that be like their culture to build on their prior knowledge? Like, reading a story about their heritage for them to relate to it and understand it better." Carla responded: "No, not the term of culturally responsive teaching, but I do encourage writing about traditions and applying it to the writing compositions."

Hugo and Clarissa (5th Grade). Both teachers were not very familiar with the model of culturally responsive teaching, but would like training. Clarissa responded: "Tying learning into their own personal experiences. Especially with our ELLs, they may know it in Spanish, and so encouraging them to respond in English." Hugo responded: "Would it be like Sheltered Instruction? Or is it more like dealing with real world situations; making instruction part of them so that they can connect. We need training."

High-achieving campus 2 (HA2). The classroom environment for the implementation of culturally responsive teaching for HA2 was recorded in Table 4.2, and it was based on the classroom observations performed. The data reflected a pattern similar to that found at HA1 with 4th grade teachers exhibiting the highest incidence of CRT (61%), followed by the 3rd grade teachers (56%), and 5th grade teachers (46%). Based on classroom observations, teachers from HA2 participating in the study provided a classroom library with literature of different cultures and genres based on the students' needs, such as the novel *Esperanza Rising*. These teachers are required to read a novel a week with their students.

In addition, HA2 teachers provided opportunities for student interaction, discussion of vocabulary words, presentations for oral language development, and the teachers acted more as facilitators. In one particular 3rd grade classroom, there was a strong teacher and student relationship, as the students took risks to respond and used high academic vocabulary (e.g., *discombobulated*). As far as artifacts, the classroom environment for these teachers exhibited students' samples of work with the implementation of mental anchors, the implementation of Claymation projects in a 4th grade classroom based on novels read, and the writing of powerful sentences for students to implement while speaking and writing were also required.

Teacher interviews: 3rd -5th grade teachers (HA2). During interviews, teachers from HA2 reported the following:

Angelina and Marissa (3rd Grade). Both teachers had very little knowledge about the model of culturally responsive teaching. Angelina responded: "It's relating

things to their culture and their heritage. The language itself helps to teach with their culture.” Marissa responded: “It’s modifying based on their needs and their culture. It’s very easy here in Laredo because we are all Hispanics.”

Sylvia and Sonia (4th Grade). Both teachers reported that it is important to provide a classroom environment that is conducive to learning and most importantly related to the students’ culture. They both provide different genres of books that address their students’ cultural differences. “*Esperanza Rising* was awesome and we extended the learning by bringing in food (*tamales*) to make it more relevant,” Sonia said. Sylvia added, “We also celebrate the different holidays in our school based on our students’ culture, (e.g., holidays as Cinco de Mayo and 16 de Septiembre) to name a few.”

Aime and Nina (5th Grade). When asked about culturally responsive teaching, Aime stated, “It’s building on what they know, their customs, and traditions. Embracing their prior knowledge and building knowledge from there.” This is what Nina responded about culturally responsive teaching, “Having to connect new learning with their home language or their first acquired language is very important. In my classroom, I connect it more in science and math because the words are very similar and they are usually cognates.”

Low-achieving campus (LA). The classroom environment for the implementation of CRT at the LA campus was recorded in Table 4.3 based on the classroom observations conducted. Like the two other campuses, the 4th grade teachers exhibited the highest incidences of CRT (82%), and they were followed by the 3rd grade teachers (73%), and the 5th grade teachers (63%). Classroom observations also revealed

that the teachers from the LA campus provided lesson plans that were aligned with the district's scope and sequence.

The teachers from the LA campus, especially the 4th grade teachers, communicated high expectations to the students and had a strong belief in the students' ability to learn. Evidence was found of communication with parents through copies of teacher/parent conferences, invitations for parents to attend school events, and a parent communication log was also found in a 4th grade classroom. The classroom environment created by these teachers revealed students' samples of work, word walls with *Mighty Words* for students to implement while writing their compositions, and graphic organizers (e.g., webs, Venn diagrams, T-charts, etc.) within foldables to paste in their journals as scaffolds.

Teacher interviews: 3rd -5th grade teachers (LA). During interviews, teachers from LA shared the following:

Nancy and Katrina (3rd Grade). When asked about culturally responsive teaching, this is what Nancy said:

It has to do with us relating our lessons to the culture of the students. We do it a lot through Social Studies. Here we are mostly Hispanics; so we tie our culture with the celebrations of *5 de Mayo* and *16 de Septiembre*. We also expose them to the African American culture as we learn about Martin Luther King. It depends on the month and the holidays as to how we expose them to the different cultures.

This is what Katrina said: "To be honest, I went and did a little research myself. It is teaching to their cultural background. Students know that the teacher is committed and the learning becomes meaningful."

Liza and Juan (4th Grade). When asked about the model of culturally responsive teaching, Juan responded:

To tell you the truth, I wasn't very familiar with the actual term, but I do know that *culturally* means culture, '*Tienes que entender su cultura*,' '*You must understand their culture*.' I'm sure it has to do with what you do with the culture of the students and teach them while respecting their culture. The students need to feel and know that their teacher is Mexican, too, has '*carne asadas*,' '*bar-b-ques*,' and eats '*Menudo*' (Mexican soup) like they do.

This is what Liza responded about culturally responsive teaching: "It's like the affective domain; you bring their culture into the classroom. Accepting them for who they are and their background. It is important to build that safe learning environment and that they feel accepted."

Melissa and Samuel (5th Grade). When asked about culturally responsive teaching, Melissa responded: "I have never heard it, but I can imagine it is taking their culture into consideration, respecting their culture, and making connections between what we are teaching and the students' culture."

Samuel replied:

No, I am not sure. Is it teaching depending on their culture? (I nodded my head with a yes). Well, then know that I talk to them about the '*maquinatas*' (slot machines) for the skill of *probability* because they need it and can make a connection. Also for *probability*, I connect it to buying scratch tickets and the *LOTTO*. I make it relevant to them and their environment. Whatever the trend is like *Facebook*, I also bring it to the classroom, but as *Mathbook*. I do whatever it takes and is out there, because it is important for my kids, and they become interested in the learning.

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is a model of teaching. For this study, CRT includes the teaching of vocabulary for ELLs that communicates high expectations, facilitates learning, demonstrates cultural sensitivity, reshapes the curriculum, promotes

student discourse, promotes easy access to background knowledge and initiates academic success for those diverse learners and cooperative learning (Gay, 2000; Hale, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1994). In all of the three participating campuses, the 4th grade teachers implemented CRT the most within their classroom environments; moreover, the 4th grade teachers from the LA campus exhibited an 82% incidence rate of CRT and was the highest among all the teachers and across all three campuses. Across all three campuses, the 4th grade teachers were followed in descending order by their 3rd grade and 5th grade counterparts in implementing CRT. LA was the campus with the highest incidence of implementation of CRT among the 3rd, 4th, and 5th grades.

If we go back to analyze the teacher interviews and their responses pertaining to CRT, none of the teachers participating from HA1, HA2, or LA knew the actual definition of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT). Some of the responses were, “that it had to do with the culture of their students,” “building on their prior knowledge,” and some even thought CRT was like “sheltered instruction.” Others mentioned that CRT involved “heritage,” “modifying based on their needs,” “having to connect new learning with their home language,” “making learning more meaningful,” the “affective” domain, and more.

Gay (2000) defined CRT as a means to address the cultural knowledge, prior knowledge experiences, and performance styles of diverse students in order to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; with the main focus being to teach through the strengths of these students. The teachers in the study from HA1, HA2, and LA demonstrated in many ways how much they cared about their students’ academic

careers, but most importantly, their lives. More information about caring will be provided when I describe Theme 4, which is Caring: Teachers teaching vocabulary and students learning vocabulary.

Research Question 3

Are there differences and similarities among vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures evidenced from the teacher interviews in each of the high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school? And if so, what are they?

The evidence gathered from the teacher interviews about vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures assisted in answering Research Question 3. The data are reported as they pertain to HA1, HA2, and LA campuses.

High-achieving campus 1 (HA1). The following data are reported:

Doris and Jane (3rd Grade). Both teachers reported that to promote effective vocabulary instruction, they incorporated the use of anchor charts and content-based vocabulary in reading, math, science, social studies, and language arts, before introducing the skill or concept. They also mentioned that they use vocabulary centers during the week as a procedure, also word walls, synonyms, and antonyms when learning about vocabulary words, graphic organizers, foldables, and they create power points of the vocabulary words being taught for the week.

Both teachers activated prior knowledge when presenting a new skill or concept by having instructional conversations about the topic. They commented, “Since we plan together as a team, all of us share lesson plans and create them from the scope and sequence from the district.”

Carla and Lizzy (4th Grade). Strategies incorporating effective vocabulary instruction include using mix-pair-share of words, making journals, writing sentences with targeted vocabulary words, making anchor charts. In addition, the procedure of having a teacher center to cover antonyms, synonyms, making graphic organizers, using foldables, asking students to write creative sentences with the vocabulary words of the week, providing examples and non-examples of the vocabulary words presented, and integrating *Mighty Words* (district provided list of academic vocabulary words for effective writing).

Hugo and Clarissa (5th Grade). They incorporate vocabulary cards with a visual, foldables, graphic organizers, anchor charts, talk about field trips, and while reading passages, they review words the students do not know by providing student friendly definitions, synonyms, and antonyms. These teachers stated that the strategies mentioned, were learned from the basal teacher edition and from their fellow teachers.

Teachers from HA1 were very similar in the sense that they all incorporated procedures such as anchor charts to display vocabulary strategies, the use of synonyms and antonyms to teach vocabulary words, and graphic organizers that help students to visualize the relationship between words and their meaning, They also implemented procedures for vocabulary learning through foldables that are three-dimensional, interactive organizers that allow students to organize, remember, review, and learn vocabulary words and their meanings in a more explicit manner.

Some differences between the grade levels do exist. The 3rd grade teachers put into practice the following procedures: content-based vocabulary, vocabulary centers,

and PowerPoint presentations of the vocabulary words being taught for the week. However, 4th grade teachers implement the use of journals, provide examples and non-examples for the vocabulary words of the week, and apply *Mighty Words* (district provided list of academic vocabulary words for effective writing). The 5th grade teachers incorporated vocabulary cards with a visual, talked about field trips, and provided student friendly definitions for the vocabulary words of the week.

All of these strategies and procedures mentioned as part of the similarities and differences within the campus are part of an effective vocabulary program as they reflect a precise and more direct approach to teaching. This approach includes instructional design and delivery procedures of vocabulary words (Archer & Hughes, 2011).

High-achieving campus 2 (HA2). The following data are reported:

Angelina and Marissa (3rd Grade). They both incorporated many strategies and procedures for vocabulary learning and mentioned that they understand that vocabulary can be developed by reading. They also mentioned that they use the following strategies and procedures to enhance their students' vocabulary: use of journals, visuals, PowerPoints of vocabulary words to preview for the upcoming story (from the adopted basal or core reading program) with words from the story with definitions. In addition, classroom discussions, presentations (implementation of oral vocabulary), partner talk, graphic organizers, context clues, connecting vocabulary to real-life experiences (making it relevant to the students), acting out words, and always expecting students to go beyond the basic responses with simple words and instead requiring the implementation of academic vocabulary in their responses.

Angelina and Marissa reported that they consider implementation of a classroom library as the most important procedure since the library helps them provide extended activities for students to complete before, during, and after reading. During these activities, they provided their students with strategies as sentence starters and encouraged their students to write powerful sentences as part of their vocabulary development. *Powerful sentences* are those with seven words or more.

Sylvia and Sonia (4th Grade). Both Sylvia and Sonia implemented the vocabulary strategy of teaching students how to look up words in the dictionary and how to use root words, suffixes, prefixes, vocabulary quilts, novels (in the classroom library), journals, context clues, and *Mighty Words*. They also commented, “Basically we do provide a lot of visuals for the stories that we read and use the vocabulary words every day.”

Aime and Nina (5th Grade). The vocabulary strategies and procedures they both provided for their students include: teaching parts of speech, multiple meaning words with visuals, root words, context clues, word walls, journal writing, the Frayer model, a classroom library, student friendly definitions for vocabulary words from stories in the basal, think-pair-share to discuss vocabulary words and their meaning, and the use of the dictionary. According to Minicucci and her colleagues (1995), maximizing student engagement through think, pair, and share to define a vocabulary word, is much more effective than the dictionary.

The teachers from HA2 were very similar in the sense that they all incorporated strategies and procedures such as a classroom library that contains books and novels of

different genres, context clues to assist in the meaning of unknown vocabulary words found in the stories of the adopted basal, journal writing, and the use of visuals to better understand vocabulary words of the week. Furthermore, these teachers demonstrated fidelity to the core reading program by following the basal and teaching the vocabulary words from the stories of the basal for better comprehension. According to Wallace (2007), the core reading program used in the classroom is a good place to begin choosing vocabulary words for effective instruction and methods for teaching them. In addition, for ELLs, additional vocabulary words need to be identified for instructional attention, and the teaching strategies need to be much more extensive than instruction usually recommended within core reading programs (Vitale & Romance, 2008; Walsh, 2009).

Some differences between the grade levels do exist. The 3rd grade teachers put into practice classroom discussions, graphic organizers, presentations, partner talk, acting out words, and always expect students to go beyond the basic responses with simple words and instead require the use of academic vocabulary in their responses. The 4th grade teachers implemented the use of a dictionary, root words, prefixes, suffixes, *Mighty Words* (district provided list of academic vocabulary words for effective writing), and vocabulary quilts. The 5th grade teachers incorporated parts of speech to better understand vocabulary words, the Frayer Model, student friendly definitions, and think-pair-share to discuss vocabulary words and their meaning.

Vocabulary words for instructional purposes should be selected carefully. Long lists of words cannot be taught in depth because rich vocabulary instruction requires

much more explicit teaching. Some researchers, such as Stahl and Fairbanks (1986), recommend teaching only about 8 to 10 words per week this way, while others suggest teaching 2 to 3 words per day, but always with lots of future review and extension (Gersten et al., 2007; Roberts, 2005; Wallace, 2007).

Low-achieving campus (LA). The following data are reported:

Nancy and Katrina (3rd Grade). These are the strategies and procedures they implement when teaching vocabulary: pictures representing the vocabulary words, student friendly definitions for a better understanding of a meaning of a word, sentences with the vocabulary word being introduced, cognates, poetry, idioms, and body language (pantomime) is also effective for students who struggle with vocabulary. These teachers added that they have learned these strategies and procedures to teach vocabulary from their teacher friends, since professional development sessions have been limited.

Liza and Juan (4th Grade). The vocabulary strategies and procedures they reported implementing are clarification of English words in Spanish, cognates, internet assistance of word definitions, graphic organizers, modeling with student friendly definitions, *Google* (search engine) for real life visuals provided online, anchor charts, idioms, and the implementation of *Mighty Words* (district provided list of academic vocabulary words for effective writing) while writing compositions.

I was able to witness some of these strategies and procedures in action while visiting the classrooms. The use of idioms was one of my favorite observations because some of our ELLs take things literally. A 4th grade teacher explained the meaning of the idiom, “*It’s raining cats and dogs,*” in the following way. “Boys and Girls, when you

hear the idiom, *It's raining cats and dogs*, what can you imagine in your head? Are you able to create a mental image?" Students responded: "Yes," "no," or nothing at all. She then asked the students to close their eyes as she described, with detail and intonation, a thunderstorm:

Rain is falling rapidly; lighting is flashing dangerously; you can hear the crash of thunder very loudly (she bangs a book on her desk); being close to a window may not be the best place to be because it can break with the heavy winds (makes the sound of wind).

The teacher then had her students open their eyes. She then asked, "Have you ever experienced a thunderstorm?" Students responded: "Yes." Teacher asked: "How did you feel?" Students responded: "scared," "like crying," "not well," "too much rain can destroy homes, right?" Teacher responded: "Yes, good; OK, so how would you tell me about a thunderstorm, in a few words?" Students responded: "It's raining really bad"; "be careful with the rain"; "don't go outside; it can be dangerous." Teacher added: "Or you can simply say, 'It's raining cats and dogs.'" Boys and girls, this is an idiom; an idiom is used to describe something or someone, and there are many idioms. Let's review other idioms in this book." At the end of the lesson, the students were able to make connections with some of the sayings they hear at home in Spanish, like '*Cuando el rio suena, agua lleva*' (dealing with rumors) – or '*Dime con quien andas y te dire quien eres*' (dealing with behavior and character).

Melissa and Samuel (5th Grade). The vocabulary strategies and procedures they implemented were journals, student friendly definitions, stories linked to the math strategy with purposeful academic vocabulary, and pictures next to every vocabulary word throughout the classroom bulletin boards. These two teachers also implemented

making connections with the vocabulary words through real-life experiences, cognates, idioms, and providing multiple opportunities to say, write, see, and use the vocabulary words while writing in their journals.

According to Samuel:

I understand that vocabulary is the key to success. Just like gasoline for a car, the car needs gasoline to move; the same with instruction, if you don't have vocabulary, the kids will not learn. For me, vocabulary is very important and also that the students retain it and use it in their everyday life. Notice around my classroom, I have vocabulary cards from a company, *Mentoring Minds*; but I also implement pictures, especially when the skill is complex. I try to make it as easy as possible. My students will get it one way or the other and when they do, they will learn it forever.

The teachers from LA are very similar in the sense that they all incorporated strategies and procedures such as the use of cognates to explain vocabulary words and the use of their ELLs' native language to explain further a vocabulary word. They also used idioms to prevent confusion (by not interpreting a term literally) and added more knowledge. In addition, the teachers provided student friendly definitions to help students acquire a deeper understanding of a vocabulary word and placed pictures next to every vocabulary word presented for the lesson; these are all scaffolds found on the bulletin boards around the classroom for students to use while listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Effective vocabulary instruction includes multiple exposures to target words over several days and across listening, speaking, reading, and writing opportunities.

According to Gersten et al. (2007), ELLs will benefit most from rich, intensive vocabulary instruction (a) that emphasizes "student-friendly" definitions; (b) that engages students in the meaningful use of word meanings in reading, writing, speaking,

and listening; and (c) that provides regular review. Furthermore, Gersten et al. (2007) and others asserted that the goal of rich vocabulary instruction is for students to develop an understanding of word meanings to the point where they can use these vocabulary words in their communication and as a basis for further learning as they progress from grade level to grade level in their academic lives (Gersten et al., 2007; Graves, 2009; Lugo-Neris et al., 2010).

Some differences between the grade levels do exist. The 3rd grade teachers and their students practice writing sentences with the vocabulary words being introduced. These teachers also implemented the use of poetry and body language (pantomime) as an effective strategy to use for students who struggle with vocabulary. The 4th grade teachers clarified the meaning of English words with Spanish words, used the internet as assistance to promote word learning, used *Google* (search engine) for real life visuals provided online, and used *Mighty Words* while writing compositions. The 5th grade teachers incorporated stories linked to the math concept being introduced by having students (a) use purposeful academic vocabulary, (b) connect the meaning of the vocabulary words with real life experiences, and (c) have multiple opportunities for them to say, write, see, and use the vocabulary words while writing in their journals.

Vocabulary instruction should involve cognitive skills instruction and allow students to draw on their background knowledge, be problem solvers as they encounter new words, and notice other words (context clues) in order to learn unknown vocabulary words. This instruction should also provide students with opportunities to predict and infer meanings, question the use of specific words, analyze words and parts of words,

make judgments about the selection and use of certain words, and evaluate their use of words and how words are used by others (Santoro et al., 2008).

Across the campuses (HA1, HA2, and LA), there are clear similarities and differences when it comes to vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures being implemented, and they were described thoroughly while answering this research question. In order to reiterate the similarities across the campuses, regardless of their identification (HA1, HA2, and LA), I would like to summarize and list them once again. Similarities in vocabulary procedures through effective vocabulary strategies being implemented included in all three campuses the use of *Mighty Words* (strategy) in a word wall (district provided list of academic vocabulary words for effective writing as a procedure), graphic organizers (strategy), pictures/visuals (strategy), student friendly definitions (strategy), anchor charts (strategy), and journal writing across all content areas as a procedure for vocabulary learning. Differences identified in (a) HA1 were: content-based vocabulary, vocabulary centers, PowerPoint presentations of the vocabulary words being taught for the week, and discussions about field trips; (b) HA2: presentations, vocabulary quilts, and the Frayer Model; and (c) LA: poetry and pantomime, clarification of the meaning of English words with Spanish words, and used the internet as assistance to promote word learning. These strategies and procedures were implemented by the participating teachers and noted during the teacher interviews. Further, research states that vocabulary instruction should include opportunities for students to work with words in multiple ways, including identifying synonyms and

antonyms, looking for roots and using cognates, and graphic organizers to assist in connecting new words to known words (VanDeWeghe, 2007; Vitale & Romance, 2008).

Emerging Themes

The following are the four themes that emerged from the findings reported in the study while answering the research questions: (a) Empowerment: Best Instructional Practices in Vocabulary and Culturally Responsive Classroom Environment, (b) Frustrations: Lack of Professional Development and Time, (c) Monitoring: Effective Implementation of Vocabulary Instruction and Student Artifacts, and (d) Caring: Teachers Teaching Vocabulary and Students Learning Vocabulary. A complete analysis with relation to the research questions, through actual feedback from the participants, as well as research and my personal experiences are also described to support the identified themes.

Theme 1: Empowerment

Within the “Empowerment: Best Instructional Practices in Vocabulary and Culturally Responsive Classroom Environment” theme, I found that the principals and the teachers were attempting to make the best educational decisions, while meeting the needs of their students at their campuses. These findings came about after carefully examining the responses of the teachers for questions 1 and 5 of the teacher interviews and the principals’ responses. The principal from HA1 responded: “If the curriculum is consistent in the classroom, regular students, ELLs, and Special Education students will all benefit.” Based on my analysis when answering Research Question 1, it appears that all teachers follow the district’s scope and sequence; however, when needed, they are

empowered to implement additional resources and make the best educational decisions needed to facilitate student academic success. The 3rd grade teachers from HA1 stated that they “both follow the district scope and sequence, and enforce differentiation of instruction, especially for struggling students.” Differentiation of instruction stems from the differences among learners, how they learn, learning preferences, and individual interests (Anderson, 2007). Therefore, differentiation is an organized, yet flexible way of proactively adjusting teaching and learning methods to accommodate each child’s learning needs and preferences in order to achieve his or her maximum growth as a learner (Tomlinson, 1999).

As I further reflected on the comments from the teachers and the principals, I could not help but think about my experiences as a 3rd grade student. I was a 3rd grade recent arrival from Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico, in an elementary school in Chicago, Illinois. My 3rd grade teacher, Ms. Betancourt (Puerto Rican by the way), was very strict, but she also knew that I needed that extra academic assistance to succeed. She knew that I was a Spanish speaker coming from Mexico, and so she made sure, that I felt comfortable while I was learning the English language in her class.

I still remember how Ms. Betancourt taught me the alphabet. She wrote the letters and next to them the name of the letter and the way I would read it Spanish. For example, for letter Aa—*ey*; for letter Bb—*bi*; for letter Cc—*si* and so on. She would also record herself reading the story of the week the Friday before. I would take the recording home and my reading book for the weekend, and I would practice the story by chorally reading along with her recording. By Monday morning, I was ready to participate with

the class during the reading of the story for the week. Now, I realize how her empowerment toward me, in the classroom really made a difference in my education. She differentiated instruction for me and provided that culturally responsive teaching to meet my needs. My experiences in that classroom are very touching and profoundly important. I would also like to add that because of this teacher, I became a teacher myself.

Additionally, all teachers observed for the implementation of vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures provided students with opportunities to use vocabulary words in context. Also as noted in question 1, they did so through the language domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and some even allowed students to speak in their Native language when they lacked the English vocabulary word. ELLs need to engage in academic discourse through the four language domains with teachers and peers in order to transition into the English language more successfully (Scarcella, 2003). They should use content and language development to enhance both vocabulary development and comprehension of the structure and function of the language being learned (L2) (Scarcella, 2003). This concept of academic language expands current thinking around “vocabulary” to attend to the five-nested components of language: (a) phonological, (b) lexical, (c) grammatical, (d) sociolinguistic, and (e) discourse (Scarcella, 2003).

Furthermore, when I actually asked the teachers about their knowledge of culturally responsive teaching (CRT), regardless of the campus (high-achieving or low-achieving), they did not really know what the term meant. Marissa, a teacher from HA2,

shared, “It’s modifying based on their needs and their culture. It’s very easy here in Laredo because we are all Hispanics.” Nonetheless, their actions revealed that they did implement certain aspects of CRT (see response to Research Question 2).

Teachers also provided to varying degrees an effective classroom environment based on the culturally responsive teaching approach identified. In high-performing schools with identified low-socioeconomic students, the students appeared to have opportunities to engage in more challenging classwork than in low-performing schools, when differentiated instruction was implemented (Lauer, Palmer, Van Buhler, & Fries, 2002). Looking back at the percentages presented in Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, there is a range among campuses as far as the classroom environment with 46% being the lowest and presented at HA1 and 82% being the highest and presented at LA. As far as the least effective strategies (LES), percentages were all low, which is very good, with the lowest being a 0% presented at HA2 and the highest being 30% presented at all campuses.

Best instructional practices are very important for the academic success of ELLs (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999). Teachers implementing such practices, communicate high expectations, facilitate the learning of vocabulary, and provide an environment conducive to teaching vocabulary and learning vocabulary (Gay, 2000). In addition, these practices are essential in order to begin to close the achievement gap between ELLs and White students (Padrón, Waxman, & Rivera, 2003).

Theme 2: Frustrations

The second theme that emerged in my study, “Frustrations: Lack of Professional Development and Time,” signifies that more time and professional staff development

experiences focused on vocabulary development are needed to teach skills, objectives, and academic vocabulary that are necessary for ELLs to achieve success in comprehending standardized assessments and to facilitate their overall academic achievement. The lack of professional development training is a major deficit in this district, since more effective vocabulary procedures and strategies are needed to assist the teachers of ELLs. This need became very evident as I was analyzing the data to respond to question 3. Teachers were very frustrated because they did not have enough time in the day and lacked the professional knowledge and skills to provide appropriate vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures to their students to help them succeed.

The most effective professional development engages teams of teachers to focus on the needs of their students (Strong et al., 2004). The teachers learn new strategies, collaborate, and problem solve together, in order to ensure all students achieve academic success. School systems use a variety of schedules to provide this collaborative learning and work time for their teachers (National Staff Development Council, 2001). Furthermore, research suggests that professional development sessions should be implemented with the intent of observing and assessing the purpose and actions of these professionals to demonstrate increased academic achievement for ELLs in the area of vocabulary (Snow & Kim, 2007; Tallerico, 2005). In essence, in a community of teachers where professional development is provided, the teachers are empowered to make the best instructional decisions for their students, thereby facilitating the creation of a climate of respect in which best instructional practices are shared in support of student learning (Bryk et al., 1999).

Because of the accountability pressure that is placed on teachers through students' performance on state-mandated exams, teachers tend to use personal time to tutor students in need of vocabulary knowledge and do research on their own to implement better vocabulary strategies and to establish vocabulary learning procedures. Hugo (5th grade teacher from HA1) stated that "he has not attended any professional development sessions within the last two years for vocabulary; however, he is always trying to see what is out there." A review of research clearly indicates that vocabulary knowledge is a critical factor in the school success of English language learners (Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005; Folse, 2004). Furthermore, research indicates that knowledge of English vocabulary is one of the strongest correlates of the discrepancy between the reading performance of native English speakers and that of ELLs (especially because ELLs are being assessed in the English language) (Carlo et al., 2005; Folse, 2004). Liza (4th grade teacher from LA) expressed frustration about the lack of applications (APPs) for the iPads that her 4th grade students need during the mathematics block. If she were to be provided with more applications, Liza mentioned that these resources would help "keep our students engaged." Melissa (5th grade reading teacher from LA) indicated that her biggest frustration was, "not enough time to teach the skills before the assessment." This correlation remains true despite the fact that many ELLs possess a large vocabulary in their native language (Garcia, 1991; Goldenberg, Rezaei, & Fletcher, 2005; Verhoeven, 1990), but also focuses on the need to expand their English vocabularies. According to Gettinger and Seibert (2002), academic success and productivity reflect the proportion of engaged learning time during which students are

performing relevant instructional activities that provide a balance of high and medium success, with more activities targeted at a high-success level.

Theme 3: Monitoring

Monitoring: Effective Implementation of Vocabulary Instruction and Student Artifacts is Theme 3. This theme in particular is very significant and concurs with the research by Fuchs and Fuchs (2002):

When teachers use systematic progress monitoring to track their students' progress in reading, mathematics, or spelling, they are better able to identify students in need of additional or different forms of instruction, they design stronger instructional programs, and their students achieve better. (p. 1)

All of the 18 teachers observed assessed their students' current vocabulary knowledge and/or level of vocabulary and, as needed, activated their students' prior knowledge and built upon the schema they possessed. The teachers also provided relevant examples in order for students to make connections and provided note-taking techniques to help the students learn. The monitoring of this vocabulary development through the Curriculum Based Assessments (CBAs), benchmarks, and Accelerated Reader (AR) levels, to name a few, has proven to be very effective for the success of the ELLs. This theme came about while answering question 1.

While observing the classrooms, I was able to witness oral presentations, instructional conversations between teacher and students, and more. The oral presentations that come to mind were those in HA2 (4th grade classroom) with the use of Claymations. The students read novels and created visuals with clay based on the different parts of the novel; photographed the visuals; and uploaded them into a PowerPoint presentation (Claymation). The students worked in groups and orally

presented their novels. The teacher and the students in the audience asked them (the student presenters) questions. While responding to the questions, the students expanded their responses with academic terms and the teacher provided immediate and corrective feedback, as needed. The ELLs in the classroom played an active role in the learning of vocabulary words; this active student engagement was a feature of good instruction and a characteristic of competent readers (Pearson & Fielding, 1991).

The participating teachers monitored the progress of their students through their AR levels acquired, scores on the Curriculum Based Assessments (CBAs), and benchmarks. All teachers from the three campuses responded that they were visited very frequently by their campus administrators (on a weekly basis, at times) and received immediate feedback, as well. Some of the feedback included applying more vocabulary development into their lessons, the importance of oral presentations, and use of graphic organizers to develop students' vocabulary.

Researchers found that visiting classrooms is positively associated with improved student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Additional studies provided some evidence that classroom visits can contribute to improved student behavior as well (Keesor, 2005). However, a small percentage of teachers found the instructional supervision process a bit threatening (Blase & Blase, 2002). Overall, though, there was evidence that classroom visits can have a positive effect on students and teachers. Bryk and Schneider (2002) noted the importance of teachers feeling valued and respected by their principals after feedback from the classroom observation was provided. Nonetheless, if classroom visits are isolated or

unconnected activities with no feedback for the teachers, then they may not contribute to positive outcomes for teachers and the students they serve (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Student artifacts are specific vocabulary assignments that are used to demonstrate and monitor how well students can meet an important reading standard. Good literacy procedures and the strategies of providing students with visual or hands-on activities to connect with new vocabulary can be crucial for building background knowledge when reading about a new topic (Wilfong, 2013). Based on my analysis while answering Research Question 1, all digital photographs of student artifacts gathered (204 to be exact) not only demonstrated development of vocabulary learning, but also a sense of students' and teachers' pride, belonging, and understanding.

The teachers displayed student work in their classroom bulletin boards. In some of the classrooms, the bulletin boards were divided into the different content areas (e.g., Reading, Math, Science, Social Studies, and Language Arts), and they provided evidence of a clear understanding of the words the students were learning during that particular week. For example, in one of the classroom in LA, the 4th grade teacher displayed a bulletin board word wall with '*Mighty words*'. He provided a picture next to the '*Mighty word*' and the students were asked to create a student friendly definition of the word. As an extension, the students were provided with a vocabulary quilt where they were asked to define, provide a synonym, and an example or non-example of the vocabulary word. These products were displayed on the reading bulletin board because the vocabulary words presented were related to the story of that particular week. All of the students participating in this activity were ELLs and non-ELLs, because research

suggests that strategies initially developed with ELLs in mind are often beneficial for everyone (McLaughlin, 2010).

Research by Wiggins and McTighe (2005) indicated that teachers should begin their vocabulary instruction planning with the end in mind. In other words, when delivering vocabulary instruction across the content areas, they must first think about what exactly the students are going to be expected to know or do with their new word knowledge. For example, with respect to the content of science and the vocabulary words presented in this content area, the students should be able to integrate the new vocabulary knowledge while they work on an experiment during science lab (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Scaffolds were also provided for vocabulary enrichment, monitoring, and support. All of the participating teachers in the study provided a print-rich environment with many visuals for support of learning (e.g., word walls, posters with synonyms and antonyms, word games, books of different genres, lists of cognates, dictionaries, etc.). They also taught the students how to refer back to these scaffolds in the classroom while they were working independently. According to research by Blachowicz and Fisher (2004), students benefit from word-rich classrooms in which time is taken to stop and discuss new words from the classroom environment, especially for vocabulary development. In some cases, the artifacts displayed cultural sensitivity as they were created based on literature of different genres (Gay, 2000).

I clearly remember Ms. Betancourt's classroom as one with a lot of print on the walls and many books to read. She would also decorate her classroom according to the

season. I remember that winter was fairly long in Chicago because of the snowy days. Since I was coming from a place where there was no snow, at first I was amazed, and then it became part of the environment. Because I was a Spanish reader, she would highlight my ability by asking me to read poems to the class. She made me feel so good, that I would go home to tell my parents how happy I was in school. I also want to add that I quickly developed the English language, and by the end of my 3rd grade year, not only was I reading in English, but I was also singing along to Michael Jackson and Madonna's tunes.

Theme 4: Caring

The fourth and final theme identified is “Caring: Teachers Teaching Vocabulary and Students Learning Vocabulary.” Throughout my study, I did not perceive or experience a difference when it came to the teachers teaching vocabulary words within the three campuses and the students learning the vocabulary words. In other words, the teachers and students from HA1, HA2, and LA were not very different—all the teachers expressed that caring factor and ultimately wanted student success for their ELLs. The principals from the participating campuses were welcoming and inviting, and they demonstrated a very supportive caring relationship toward their teachers as described in the responses to Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. LA campus had been low achieving for a couple of years when I invited them to be part of my study; at first, the teachers were a bit apprehensive. After I explained the procedures, they became more comfortable and they knew that this was an opportunity to prove to the district that they were on their way to academic success. I did not share with them or identify to them the other

participating campuses, but they knew how they were ranked in the district and the other campuses had to be higher ranked than they were.

Rogers and Webb (1991) described the philosophy of caring as that where teachers encourage dialogue in their classrooms, are sensitive to the needs and passions of their students, and create relationships through relevant and rigorous curriculum and models of instruction (Pompa, Higareda, Treviño, & Guerra, 2011). What was very evident to me was that in all three of the participating campuses, the principals cared about their teachers and students; teachers cared about their students and their learning; and, most importantly, students felt comfortable and cared for at all three campuses. Research indicates that, “When teachers feel supported and encouraged, they are more motivated and enthusiastic about implementing new strategies and techniques” (Cummins, 2006, p. 12). In addition, Noddings (2003) stated that educators must recognize that care cannot be taken lightly, since it is a major purpose of schools. Teachers must acknowledge that caring for students is essential in teaching and developing individuals, since a sturdy capacity for care is a key objective of responsible education (Pompa et al., 2011). Jacobsen, Eggen, and Kauchak (2006) asserted that struggling students improve academically because of teachers who care about them as individuals and learners. These researchers further stated that it is practically impossible for educators to succeed without authentically caring about their pupils and their learning (Pompa et al., 2011). The caring relationship is essential as a starting point for a continuous framework of support, but it is not enough to ensure competent teaching. Caring teachers listen to the needs of their students and help them acquire the knowledge

and attitudes needed to achieve their academic goals (Noddings, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999).

Petra (principal from LA) once stated that her goal was to “drive this campus into academic success for all stakeholders.” This principal made sure this message was communicated to her teachers and the teachers were ready to perform and instruct to the best of their abilities. Epstein (2003) asserted that

if children feel cared for and are encouraged to work hard in the role of student, they are more likely to do their best to learn, write, and calculate, to learn other skills and talents, and, most importantly, to remain in school. (p. 355)

David was a recent immigrant in a 4th grade classroom from HA2. The fact that the teacher would take the time to explain to him on a one-to-one basis, in his Native language, was a clear example of caring for him and his needs as a student. In fact, David reminded me of me, as a 3rd grade recent arrival in Chicago, Illinois. David was also a very confident little boy, who often took risks in his learning, and made friends very easily. He even had his peers speaking to him in the Spanish language. Strong caring relationships that teachers create with their students have a positive effect on schools, classrooms, and individual students (Henderson & Milstein, 2003).

While in Ms. Betancourt’s 3rd grade class, she and I would sometimes have side conversations in Spanish. Because she was a Puerto Rican-American and I was Mexican-American, we actually had great conversations in the Spanish language. I became so comfortable with her that my personal frustrations about not knowing the English language soon diminished. I remember asking her why English was so complicated; she would laugh and say, “Don’t worry; you will get it.” For example,

techo in Spanish refers to the English terms *roof* (outside) and *ceiling* (inside). Other vocabulary words with which I had difficulty were multiple meaning words, like *blue* (color and a feeling), *bark* (related to dog or related to a tree), *fall* (as an action, or a season), *pitcher* (to drink from, or a position in baseball), and *park* (related to parking a car or where you find a playground). As Ms. Betancourt assured me, although very complicated to understand as an 8-year-old, I did get it. Nonetheless, I would like to add that still today, my parents, siblings, and I only speak Spanish at home; we have intensive dialogues about what is happening in our family life, and I love it.

I would like to add, that Ms. Betancourt clearly cared about my schooling, about me learning the English language, cared about me learning to read in English; and most importantly, she cared about my well-being as a person. She made sure I felt good, and that I was successful. She never underestimated my ability for learning and even recommended me to an all-English class in the 4th grade with Mrs. Wilson; that is how much she believed in me. As I remember Ms. Betancourt and how much she cared about me as a student and as an individual, I am reminded of her through the words of Leo Buscaglia: “Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

Summary

The data collected through the classroom observations, artifacts, and teacher interview transcripts were analyzed for content that could be unitized for the findings and answering the research questions of this study. Unitized data led to the responses

provided for the three research questions with the data presented as it pertained to two high-achieving campuses and the low-achieving campus. Broad themes emerged, and they were analyzed for meaning in the study and their connection to the research questions. These themes were: (a) empowerment: best instructional practices in vocabulary and culturally responsive teaching, (b) frustrations: lack of professional development and time, (c) monitoring: effective implementation of vocabulary instruction and student artifacts, and (d) caring: teachers teaching vocabulary and students learning vocabulary. In this chapter, a complete analysis with actual feedback from the participants, as well as cited research, and my personal experiences are also described to support the identified themes. The uniqueness of the cases selected for the study was not determined solely by school demographics, but also by the documented levels of success that one of the schools achieved despite their high proportion of ELLs. In the next chapter, I will present a discussion of the findings, conclusions, implications for further research and practice, and final recommendations.

CHAPTER V

**DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER
RESEARCH, IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, AND FINAL
RECOMMENDATIONS***

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast vocabulary instructional strategies that promoted academic achievement among ELLs and their peers, in two high-achieving schools and one low-achieving school in a U.S.-Mexico border community. Effective vocabulary instruction exists in many forms, and it is important that students' conceptions of learning go beyond the narrow view that they are simply acquiring a simple skill but rather learning vocabulary words for a lifetime (Posner & Rudnitsky, 2001). To understand the results better, this study answered the following research questions:

1. What are the vocabulary instructional procedures identified from the classroom observations, the student artifacts, and the teacher interviews in the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?
2. Is there evidence of culturally responsive teaching among the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?

*Reprinted with permission from “But I’m just their teacher—Why should I care? The effects of a caring centered environment in the literacy achievement of ELLs” by C. Pompa, S. Higareda, C. Treviño, and C. Guerra, 2011. *Journal of Border Educational Research*, 9, 113-122, Copyright 2016 by Carmen Amparo Pompa.

3. Are there differences and similarities among vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures evidenced from the teacher interviews in each of the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school? And if so, what are they?

Chapter V is divided into five sections. The first section is a discussion of the findings of this study as it pertains to the three research questions mentioned above. The second section provides the conclusions based on the analysis of data that was collected for this research study. The third section provides implications for further research. The next section of Chapter V describes the implications for practice, and the final section provides the final recommendations.

Constructing Meaning Through Discussions Within the Research Questions

Discussion of the Findings for Research Question 1

What are the vocabulary instructional procedures identified from the classroom observations, the student artifacts, and the teacher interviews in the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?

Classroom observations. As Good and Brophy (2000) stated, “one role of observational research is to describe what takes place in classrooms in order to delineate the complex practical issues that confront practitioners” (p. 337). Researchers have identified some of the major strengths of using classroom observations that allow educators to do the following: (a) study the processes of education in naturalistic settings, (b) provide more detailed and precise evidence than other data sources, and (3) stimulate change and verify that the change occurred (Padrón, Waxman, & Huang,

1999). The instructional events that are provided by classroom observations have also been found to lead toward an improved understanding of instruction in the classroom and better models for improving teaching (Padrón et al., 1999). In addition, many of the reviews and summaries of classroom observation research, such as that by Walberg (1991, 1995), have consistently found that classroom behaviors, actually observed, significantly relate to students' academic achievement.

The classroom observations focused on whether the teachers from the three participating campuses delivered vocabulary instructional strategies and implemented vocabulary development procedures for the ELLs to learn vocabulary and be successful in school. The observation results will be discussed in two parts, the instructional strategies and procedures observed and recorded with the observation tool and my reflective journal, and the student artifacts collected through digital photographs. The observations provided me with opportunities to tally evidence observed as 2+ being a strong indicator of the practice being implemented, 1 being OK or observed one time only and 0 being not observed at all or zero observations of the particular practice (see Appendix G). The only components considered for this study and in the results previously presented in Chapter IV were the evidence observed as 2+ strong. For this discussion, I have italicized the actual components in the classroom observation as it is stated in the observation form and that was rated 2+ strong at all of the participating campuses.

In all three campuses, regardless of identification – high-achieving or low-achieving, all of the teachers observed demonstrated some of the HES identified as

strong 2+. If you remember, in Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3, the HES were grouped and analyzed providing lower percentages altogether. For example, in Table 4.1, the 3rd grade teachers from HA1 scored a 60% for HES 1-5, 7 and 55% for HES 9-11, 13. In Table 4.2, the 3rd grade teachers from HA2 scored a 67% for HES 1-5, 7 and 65% for HES 9-11, 13. In Table 4.3, the 3rd grade teachers from LA scored a 53% for HES 1-5, 7 and a 73% for HES 9-11, 13; however, these same 3rd grade teachers from the three campuses scored a 100% implementation of the HES 1 and 11. These included procedures such as:

HES 1: Preparation for vocabulary instruction through a systematic approach (separating words into Tiers, implementation of word maps, graphic organizers, providing student friendly definitions, synonyms, concept attainment, mental anchors with visuals, etc.). Also, the participating 3rd grade teachers from HA1, HA2, and LA implemented the scope and sequence from the district in order to implement the systemic approach necessary for vocabulary development. These practices are identified in the relevant research from this study, as teachers must not assume that vocabulary is known, but rather, must provide daily vocabulary instruction in academic English that begins early and across all content areas (Gersten et al., 2007; Spencer & Guillaume, 2006).

HES 11: Checking for understanding with concrete task/questions that require critical thinking/immediate and corrective feedback from teacher. This was also evident at 100% implementation from the 3rd grade teachers. All of the participating teachers (HA1, HA2, and LA) had their personal strategy for checking for

understanding. Some teachers used Popsicle sticks to select students to ask questions about the objective being presented (HA1); other teachers implemented sheltered instruction strategies to maximize student learning (think-pair-share, turn to your neighbor, context clues, etc.) (LA), and still others implemented ‘quick writes’ – that allowed the teacher to ask a question, called for students to write the response, and show the response to the teacher for immediate feedback (HA2). As noted earlier, academic vocabulary is challenging for both ELLs and native English speakers. Within text, there are clues for the reader that will assist them with the meaning of any of the unknown words. ELLs need to be taught to use clues that are implicit in the text to solve problems in comprehension due to unknown vocabulary (Carlo et al., 2004; Greenwood & Flanigan, 2007). For ELLs, one way to draw upon first-language skills is to use cognate-related instruction. The participating 3rd grade teachers (LA) because of the number of ELLs in their classroom provided lists of cognates as scaffolds for their ELLs to use as a reference during independent activities. Cognates are words that are similar in their native languages to English forms of words (Garcia, 1991). Five years later, Garcia (1996) found that middle-grade Spanish-speaking students were able to learn how to use Spanish cognates to figure out English words.

In Table 4.1, the 4th grade teachers from HA1 scored 57% for HES 1-5, 7 and 65% for HES 9-11, 13. In Table 4.2, the 4th grade teachers from HA2 scored 70% for HES 1-5, 7 and 58% for HES 9-11, 13. In Table 4.3, the 4th grade teachers from LA scored 57% for HES 1-5, 7 and 78% for HES 9-11, 13; however, these same 4th grade

teachers from the three campuses scored a 100% implementation of the HES 2 and 13.

These included procedures such as:

HES 2: Explicit instruction with modeling (activating/building background knowledge, making connections, word walls, semantic maps-before, during and after reading, multiple encounters with the words are available for students, etc.).

All of the participating 4th grade teachers (HA1, HA2, and LA) modeled for their students how to use a vocabulary word in context, provided numerous examples of the words, and made vocabulary instruction relevant to their students. According to research, the strategies mentioned above illustrate the sheltered instruction strategies as targeted vocabulary development and associations to student experiences (Addison, 1988; Echevarria, 1995; Echevarria & Graves, 2003; Genesee, 1999; Kauffman et al., 1995; Short, 1991; Vogt, 2000).

HES 13: Students are provided with opportunities to use vocabulary words in context through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Fourth-grade students from HA1, HA2, and LA were provided with opportunities to present their vocabulary understanding to the class. For example the 4th grade teachers from HA1, would provide a word through pantomime, and the group of students that would guess the word correctly would present their understanding of the word by providing a sentence and an example of the given word. It is important to keep in mind that the goal of vocabulary instruction is for students to “develop an understanding of word meaning to the point where they can use these and related words in their communication and as a basis for further learning” (Gersten et al., 2007, p. 13). Vocabulary instruction for ELLs should be

part of a robust literacy instruction model that includes explicit code instruction, comprehension instruction, balanced language-rich instruction, socio-culturally informed instruction, and an additive literacy instruction that supports the transfer of learning from a student's first language (L1) to the student's second language (L2) (Manyak, 2007).

In Table 4.1, the 5th grade teachers from HA1 scored 47% for HES 1-5, 7 and 45% for HES 9-11, 13. In Table 4.2, the 5th grade teachers from HA2 scored 50% for HES 1-5, 7 and 58% for HES 9-11, 13. In Table 4.3, the 5th grade teachers from LA scored 40% for HES 1-5, 7 and 45% for HES 9-11, 13; however, these same 5th grade teachers from the three campuses scored a 100% implementation of the HES 12. The procedure identified as:

HES 12: *Providing a note-taking scaffold for less proficient readers and English language learners.* All of the participating 5th grade teachers (HA1, HA2, and LA) implemented the use of journals (district initiative procedure for vocabulary development) for note taking and as a scaffold for all learners. For example in HA1, the students were instructed on how to take effective notes about vocabulary words and provided with graphic organizers to arrange their knowledge as it related to the new vocabulary words. In HA2 and LA, the journals were implemented as a study resource for students at all times of the day, (e.g., during reading, math, science, social studies, and language arts instruction); the journals also provided student-friendly definitions for the targeted vocabulary words the students were learning across contexts. When providing ELLs with explicit instruction of vocabulary words and the definitions of those words (Armbruster, 2010) in a student friendly language, teachers must remember

to make sure the definitions are understandable to ELLs (Gersten et al., 2007; Graves, 2009). Husty and Jackson (2008) found that there is increased vocabulary development when vocabulary instruction is context-based. Context helps ELLs to see relationships between known and unknown vocabulary words. Those relationships between words give ELLs more information than a definition alone for vocabulary development and make the learning of words more concrete (Graves, 2009; Husty & Jackson, 2008).

Highly effective strategies that were not evident at a 100% implementation of 2+ strong were 3-5, 7, 13. The results indicate that 50% of the HES procedures were implemented within the grade levels at a 100% rate (1, 2, 9-11).

Student artifacts. The gathering of the student artifacts through digital photographs was also conducted during the classroom observations. The learning from the students was also very evident, and most importantly at one point during the classroom observations at HA2, I was able to monitor further for understanding while the students performed their independent vocabulary activities. The students themselves demonstrated a sense of pride in their work by being very enthusiastic to demonstrate to me their vocabulary activity. They also explained the activities with great detail and asked me to photograph them for my book. This activity was the creation of a digital storybook through Claymation, and it was based on a novel they were reading in the 4th grade classroom, *Holes*. Students were asked to create their part of the novel by chapters. Group one was responsible for creating Chapters 1, 2, and 3; group two was in charge of preparing Chapters 3 and 4, and so on. As they prepared their illustrations with clay, wrote their version of the novel in their own words with the implementation of the new

vocabulary learned, they photographed their projects and then uploaded their creations to PowerPoint to produce a Claymation film and present to the class. This was awesome because all students (including the ELLs) were highly engaged in the lesson. ELLs will be most successful when they are (a) explicitly included in a school's vision, (b) not isolated physically or by program, (c) have equitable access to all resources, (d) have constant staff development from teachers, and (e) the decisions of school reform include linguistic and cultural needs of ELLs (Coady et al., 2003).

Teacher interviews. The teacher interviews provided me with opportunities to learn more about the teachers and their pedagogy. Although I was able to gather that the relationship between the teachers and the students was very strong in all three campuses, the campus that stands out from the rest was LA. While the teachers responded, there was no doubt in my mind that the teachers at LA truly cared about providing the best vocabulary instructional practices for their students, cared about providing the best classroom environment possible—adhering to the different needs (culture, language, knowledge), and cared about the final outcome of success from their ELLs. The teacher from LA that comes to mind is Juan. Remember Juan wanted to become a pediatrician but because of financial reasons, he did not; however, “he loves to be a 4th grade teacher.” He is motivating to his students and tells them “not to limit themselves and to get scholarships to better educate themselves.” In his own words, *‘No le hecho mucha crema a los tacos’* (another way of saying *I’m not exaggerating*) –that’s just being me! I teach like this every day, all year long.”

LA teachers also expressed how happy they were with their new principal and the ultimate goal for the LA campus was student success. Remember when I discussed the theme about caring, teachers from the LA campus were apprehensive at first, but then they decided to prove to the district that they were capable of teaching just as well as the rest of the elementary campuses in the district. Research indicates that, in spite of the type of Bilingual/ESL program implemented by a school or district, all teachers and administrators should consider and practice the following: different cultures must be represented in classrooms and instruction must be provided encouraging acceptance of native languages and cultures while facilitating the learning of English (Au, 2001; Mohr, 2004). It is also important to note that the new principal from LA was also at one point of her career, under the leadership supervision of the same principal as the other two new principals (from HA1 and HA2). A contributing factor to this campus (LA) could very well be the new principal and her background knowledge of building a successful school.

Although the teachers at all three campuses shared major frustrations with time and lack of professional development, they still shared and provided explicit vocabulary strategies and procedures to help students acquire a sound understanding of vocabulary when teaching their students, as reflected in Chapter IV. When vocabulary instruction includes explicit, implicit, and strategy instruction, ELLs are repeatedly exposed to the target vocabulary in a variety of contexts that increases their individual vocabulary development (Gersten et al., 2007; Husty & Jackson, 2008). Husty and Jackson (2008) found that when multiple encounters are combined with direct teaching of the words,

both ELLs and their English-speaking peers have increased performance in academics altogether.

Discussion of the Findings for Research Question 2

Is there evidence of culturally responsive teaching among the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?

The second part of the classroom observations involved observing the classroom environment within the culturally responsive teaching components. All three campuses embraced the culturally responsive teaching components to varying degrees; however, the campus with the highest scores as reflected in Table 4.3 was the LA campus.

Although during the interviews, teachers reported they were not familiar with the term culturally responsive teaching; during the classroom observations, I was able to witness different examples of this type of teaching.

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is the confidence for teachers to execute specific teaching practices and tasks that include utilizing cultural knowledge, prior experiences, cultural frames of reference, and diverse performance styles for students, in order to create a higher positive impact on the learning experiences of the students (Gay, 2000). For this discussion, I have listed the actual components that scored at 100% implementation. The campus implementing these components through culturally responsive teaching to this degree was the LA campus across the three grade levels (3rd, 4th, and 5th grade).

Component 1: Teacher communicates high expectations (provides positive reinforcement, respect for the students, and a strong belief in the student's ability to learn). During the classroom observations, I was able to find evidence of teacher motivation toward their students; all of the participating teachers (3rd, 4th, and 5th grade at LA campus) implemented positive reinforcement toward their students' learning and a strong communication with the parents. The teachers provided their students with homework passes, made positive phone calls to their home, and identified students of the week and month. Culturally relevant teaching is a term created by Gloria Ladson-Billings in 1994 to describe "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (pp. 17-18). However, socio-linguists and teacher educators, searching for ways to find links between the students' home culture and the school, described this type of schooling as *culturally appropriate*, *culturally congruent*, *culturally responsive*, and *culturally compatible* (Ladson-Billings, 1994). It is important to add that enlisting support from the home is significant because when the entire family is involved, cultural connections with the school are enhanced; the teachers at all three grade levels clearly projected this home/school connection. Ladson-Billings (1995) maintained that in order for teachers to use culturally relevant pedagogy successfully, they must also show respect for students and "understand the need for the students to operate in the dual worlds of their home community and the white community" (pp. 162-163). In fact, if a student must struggle with functioning in two disparate cultures, that of the home and that of the school, the child's literacy learning may actually be impeded (Schmidt, 1995).

Component 2. Teacher facilitates learning (role is more of a mentor, facilitator within an active learning environment). Teachers from 3rd and 4th grade at LA allowed their students to speak freely, they accepted responses in the Spanish language, and they allowed students to take risks when they were not certain about a response. Gay (2000) stressed that culturally relevant pedagogy is imperative because it uses

the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning more relevant to and effective It teaches to and through strengths of these students; it is culturally validating and affirming. (p. 29)

Gay (2000) also identified the power of caring as being one of the most important components of culturally relevant pedagogy.

Component 4: Teacher demonstrates cultural sensitivity to all her students (provides literature of different cultures, genres, based on the student needs). All teachers from LA sent notes home in English and in Spanish, different genres of books were evident in all of the classrooms, and different levels of books were also available for the students. Adger et al. (2002) suggested that every teacher should know the following about language: (a) language behavior in school settings is influenced by culture; (b) children of different cultures participate in classroom interaction in different ways; (c) dialects are natural to all languages; and (d) the role of first language in literacy and the role of the first language in learning the second language are very important factors in learning. Ladson-Billings (1995) maintained that culturally relevant teaching “requires that teachers attend to students’ academic needs, not merely to make them ‘feel good’ but that it is imperative to have students ‘choose academic excellence’”

(p. 160). By focusing on the importance of academic success in the world, teachers can foster a desire for intellectual achievement to all their students (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Component 5: Teacher promotes student classroom discourse (more student talk, less teacher talk, and students are provided with opportunities to develop language acquisition). LA participating teachers (3rd-5th) implemented sheltered instruction strategies that provided students (especially the ELLs) many opportunities to interact (think, pair, share; turn to your neighbor; ask someone who?; etc.), build language and grow academically. “Culturally relevant teachers utilize students’ culture, as a vehicle for learning” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 161). She further added, teachers who use culturally relevant pedagogy provide students with a curriculum that builds on their prior knowledge and cultural experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Component 7: Classroom environment is conducive to learning (bulletin boards display student work-artifacts, scaffolds are provided for support, etc.). As previously mentioned in Chapter IV when reporting the findings, teachers from LA (3rd and 4th) provided bulletin boards for all of the content areas (reading, math, science, social studies, and language arts), and many scaffolds were also provided for further support (words walls, cognate lists, etc.), while the students were working independently and while working in collaborative groups. By studying eight schools with exemplary programs for ELL students, Minicucci and her colleagues (1995) identified five characteristics of successful instruction: (a) innovative approaches encouraging students to become independent learners, (b) cooperative learning, (c) strong parental

involvement, (d) maximizing student engagement, and (e) a concentrated focus on the goal of learning the English language.

Component 9. There is a teacher and student relationship. Very evident in all of the classrooms from LA (3rd, 4th, and 5th grade) was that the students took risks in answering the teachers' questions, participated in oral presentations, and they were enthusiastic about coming to school every day. Especially the 5th grade teacher who made sure that if the students were absent, they would receive the homework and assignments for the day, to prevent them from falling behind. Teachers who are high in culturally responsive teaching characteristics respect the culture and experiences of their students and utilize the students' funds of knowledge to build student success (Gay, 2000). "As educators listen to their students' needs and cultural differences, they gain the students' trust, which in turn, leads students to be more open to what their teachers are trying to teach them" (Pompa et al., 2011, p. 117).

Discussion of the Findings for Research Question 3

Are there differences and similarities among vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures evidenced from the teacher interviews in each of the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school? And if so, what are they?

The teacher interviews at all three campuses demonstrated very few differences and many similarities. The first difference noted was the number of males participating in the study. Out of the 18 teachers, only 3 were males and 15 were females. Two males were in LA and the other male was in HA1. I am noting this as a difference because HA2 had all females participating, and therefore, a male perspective about vocabulary

instructional procedures and strategies was not provided for this campus. The two male teachers from LA had a Master's degree with Mid-management (Principalship) certification and the male teacher from HA1 had a Bachelor's degree. These statistics presented from this U.S.-Mexico border community are very similar to the study performed in 2012 by the U.S. Department of Education (2015) through the National Center for Education Statistics that reported that 76% of public school teachers were females and 24% were males. The next difference was the number of years of teaching experience; some teachers had as little as 2 years (see Table 3.3 from LA) and others had up to 22 years of experience (see Table 3.1 from HA1). When analyzing their responses, it was evident that the teachers with less years working as a teacher had less experience with vocabulary instructional practices and needed more professional development.

The final difference was the number of ELLs being served; some classrooms had as little as 3 ELLs (from HA2) and others as many as 60 ELLs (from HA1) due to departmentalization. According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2015), both public school enrollment and the number of public school teachers were about 2% higher in 2013 than they were in 2003. In fall 2003, the number of public school pupils per teacher was 15.9, compared with a projected number of 16.0 public school pupils per teacher in fall 2013 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2015).

Numerous similarities were reflected in the teacher interviews as reported in Chapter IV. All the teachers reported that they followed a prescribed curriculum that was the locally developed scope and sequence from the district. They also stated that the district provided a scope and sequence for all content areas, targeting the TEKS (Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills), the ELPS (English Language Proficiency Standards, and the CCRS (College and Career Readiness Standards). Vocabulary words were also embedded in all of the scope and sequences with sheltered instructional strategies on how to best deliver this knowledge of words for ELLs. Furthermore, the scope and sequence also focused on read-alouds for the teachers to implement to facilitate vocabulary development. Reading to children has been shown to have an effect not only on their recognition of new words, but also on the students' ability to use these words in their own retellings or everyday interactions (Elley, 1988).

All of the teachers from the three participating campuses were encouraged to make educational decisions according to the needs of their students, especially for ELLs; and many of the teachers requested assistance from their students when it came to vocabulary word selections. Research from 1998 by Fisher and Danielsen revealed that when students in the 4th grade were allowed to choose their own words for vocabulary and spelling instruction, they demonstrated more effective and longer-lasting word learning than they did for words chosen by the teacher. Moreover, Jimenez, Garcia, and Pearson (1996) cited self-choice of vocabulary words by students as a powerful motivator for word learning as well.

Conclusions Based on the Analysis of the Data Collected

In conclusion, a lot of work has been done in terms of finding overall patterns of effective vocabulary strategies and procedures to implement during an effective lesson. However, the choice and effectiveness of vocabulary strategies and procedures very much depends on the task (e.g., breadth vs. depth), the student (e.g., cognitive and cultural styles of learning, motivation), and the classroom environment (Gu, 2003). Enough attention on what vocabulary is (the task of vocabulary acquisition) would prevent us from focusing exclusively on word list retention strategies. It is essential to keep in mind that promoting extensive reading, carefully selecting which words to teach for comprehension purposes and choosing strategies that help students make cognitive connections through their personal schema between the new and the known are at the heart of effective vocabulary building (Stahl, 1999).

The participating teachers in this study, regardless of the campus in which they were teaching, exhibited effective vocabulary instructional practices at the best of their abilities. While performing the classroom observations, I was impressed with the vocabulary instruction presented by the teachers and by the students' engagement, regardless of the college degree (Bachelor's or Master's in Education) their teachers held. Nonetheless, the schema or prior knowledge that the student brings with them to the classroom is a very important factor (Ajideh, 2003) for the learning acquisition of vocabulary.

Vocabulary learning should include both remembering words and the ability to use the words automatically in a wide range of language contexts when the need arises (McCarthy, 1984, 1990). One way to see the overall task of vocabulary learning is through the distinction between knowing a word and using a word. In fact, evidence suggests that the knowledge aspect requires more conscious and explicit learning mechanisms, whereas the skill aspect involves mostly implicit learning and memory (Ellis, 1994, 1997). Vocabulary learning strategies, therefore, should include strategies for “using” as well as “knowing” a word.

Another strategy to be explored is the use of explicit instruction and feedback to students on how they are doing academically and what they need to achieve higher performance on standardized assessment (Marzano, 2000). In fact, a key indicator in students’ success in school, on standardized tests, and in life, is their vocabulary; indeed, the knowledge anyone has about any topic is based on the vocabulary they know (Marzano & Pickering, 2005). The National Reading Panel (2000) reported that vocabulary instruction had a strong relation to text comprehension for 4th grade students participating in the study (McKeown, Beck, Omanson, & Perfetti, 1983).

A question I often get from teachers is how many exposures to a word or words do ELLs need before they learn the word? Very different research results have been obtained in this regard. Nation (1990) concluded that 5-16 exposures are needed in order to learn a word from context. Krashen (1989) concluded that incidental vocabulary learning, or “acquisition,” achieves better results than intentional vocabulary learning. A

major flaw in this review lies in the assumption that “spelling and vocabulary are developed in second languages as they are in the first language” (Krashen, 1989, p. 454).

There is already evidence about second language learners that a combined approach is superior to incidental vocabulary learning alone. Zimmerman (1994), for example, found that three hours a week of explicit vocabulary instruction and some self-selected reading were more effective than reading alone. Paribakht and Wesche (1997) also found that reading and explicit vocabulary instruction led to superior gains academically over a period of three months.

In addition, incidental vocabulary learning through reading and listening is not only possible, but also effective for vocabulary development (Krashen, 1989). However, this strategy seems to be more effective for native speakers than for intermediate to advanced ELLs who already have at least a basic grasp of the English language skills. Nonetheless, even for these learners, the usefulness of incidental learning does not exclude the use of intentional learning strategies (Krashen, 1989). Huckin and Coady (1999) warned, “Guessing from context has serious limitations. It is still seen as an important part of vocabulary-building, especially among advanced learners, but it requires a great deal of prior training in basic vocabulary, word recognition, metacognition, and subject matter” (pp. 189-190). After all, as Ellis (1994) rightly pointed out, different aspects of vocabulary demand different attainment mechanisms and different strategies of learning words.

Recurrent patterns that emerged from the study were revealed in the first theme: *empowerment*. Teachers were empowered by their administrators to provide the effective instructional practices in vocabulary, and they were empowered to provide a culturally responsive environment. Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Although the teachers were not familiar with the term CRT, they knew that the culture a student brings is important while achieving academic success.

The second theme dealt with *frustrations*. Because of the lack of professional development available from the district, these teachers had to find resources, time, and training on their own to better assist the students in their classroom. This situation would not impede the teachers in the study from providing ELLs with effective vocabulary instruction. Since accountability standards rise every year, the district cannot just do more of the same. Concerning professional development, the real challenge schools face is how to create opportunities for teachers to develop in their practice so that they can help all students grow and expand their knowledge and ability to think critically (Birman, Desimone, Porter & Garet, 2000).

The third broad theme focused on the *monitoring* aspect of delivering effective vocabulary instruction and the reflection of such learning through the student artifacts presented. According to Diaz-Rico and Weed (2005), students perform and create artifacts, in ways that teachers expect; and their performance is based on the teacher's ability to know the students' worth, intelligence, and capability. For teachers to

contribute to the success of English language learners, they need to be better equipped to adopt these culturally responsive instructional efforts and associate them to purposefully planned and reflective assessments. When cultures are not validated or represented in schools, the academic achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse learners is negatively affected (Echevarria & Graves, 2003).

The fourth and final theme was *caring*, an element that in education is sometimes forgotten. Teachers displayed caring while teaching vocabulary to their students, and the students learned and appreciated that type of teaching. If you remember during the teacher interviews, some of them expressed that at times, ELLs provided responses in Spanish. The teachers accepted their responses because they understood the process of language development. According to Lightbown and Spada (2006), language learning is both tied to the ELLs cognitive development, as well as their experiences in learning about the relationships among people, events, and objects around them. This is very much related to the *linguistic, formal, and content schema* identified by Carrell (1984) and later by Yi and Zhang (2006). Figure 5.1 provides an example of the recoding of themes based on the teacher interviews in HA1 for one of the themes identified.

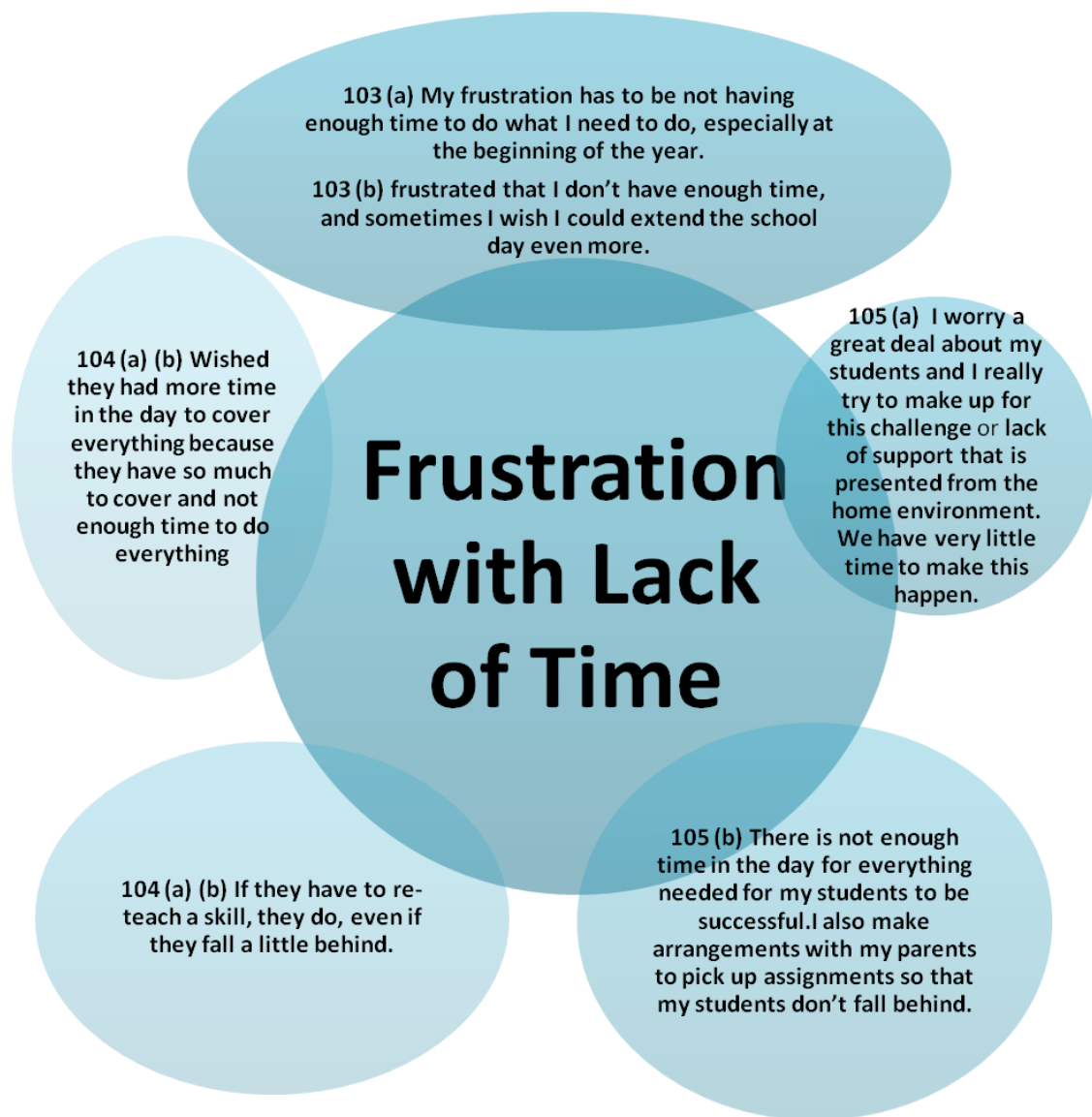


Figure 5.1. Sample of the recoding of themes based on the teacher interviews: HA1.

Implications for Further Research

Future research should focus on different aspects of learning vocabulary words as they relate to ELLs, within their classroom environments and targeting the concept of language acquisition. A critical understanding of students' backgrounds, as far as the

schema that they possess, will encourage them to participate and engage in language-building activities and thus build vocabulary (Ajideh, 2003). Teachers must also give students a great amount of opportunities to engage in “real world” learning that takes their content knowledge in school and connects it to what they are encountering in their communities on a daily basis (Gay, 2000). Furthermore, English language learners are greatly benefited when they are provided with opportunities to demonstrate a more comprehensive understanding of their abilities through validation of their cultural and linguistic needs (Ellis, 2008).

Personal styles of learning, for example, have been shown to be very much related to cultural differences (Nelson, 1995) and the ability to learn a vocabulary word or words. This research could be very beneficial for teachers of ELLs, since it is the largest minority group in the United States. Ellis (2008) confirmed that in order for English language learners to acquire language more fluently and express this knowledge, they need to be exposed to a more genuine language environment in the areas of instruction and assessment.

In addition, classroom-learning environments should demand different vocabulary learning strategies because of the different background knowledge and schema the students bring with them (Ajideh, 2003). Likewise, readers from different cultural backgrounds interpret different perspectives when they are asked to recall the text because of the background knowledge they possess from their culture (Carrell, 1984).

Finally, it could be very instructive to conduct more case studies implementing more classroom observations, with more observers, in order to determine if the vocabulary instruction identified in this present study is likely to be typical of the teachers' behaviors as identified. A more in-depth case study can also allow observers to document and examine the length of time that vocabulary instruction is being provided by the participating teachers, the audience, the instructional setting (e.g., whole class, small group, individual students, students with special needs, and/or ELLs), and the implementation of culturally responsive teaching. Furthermore, as previously mentioned multiple observers and establishing inter-rater reliability would probably be an improvement to further enhance the dependability of the coding of any study instead of a sole investigator (Auerbach et al., 2004).

Implications for Practice

Yi and Zhang (2006) identified *cultural schema* as vocabulary knowledge acquired being culture-specific where “the meaning the reader constructs may not be in the text at all, but in the readers mind” (p. 2). As previously mentioned in Chapter I, schemata may be perceived as flexible in that it undergoes a recurring process of vocabulary knowledge within, that time after time changes through information that is stored in one's memory, and provides knowledge when needed in the reading process with the least amount of effort to comprehend (Ajideh, 2003). Conceptions of learning have been found to differ from culture-to-culture (Watkins & Biggs, 1996). Even the same vocabulary strategy may be executed by teachers in different ways depending upon the different educational settings with which they are presented. Hence, teachers need to

be provided with more professional development about effective vocabulary instructional practices to implement to the different learners.

Research suggested that educators should focus on four practices that help bring vocabulary words alive for their students (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2004). These practices are (a) develop word awareness and love of words through word play; (b) expand explicit, rich instruction to build vocabulary; (c) build strategies for independence; and (d) engage students actively through a wide range of books (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2004). Students who receive good strategy training in vocabulary development can apply these strategies in a wide variety of lifelong situations, including receiving job-related training, acquiring knowledge associated with their interests and hobbies, and in preparing for post-secondary education (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2004). Although teachers reported a lack of professional development training pertaining to vocabulary development and CRT from the district, professional development focusing on vocabulary development and knowledge must also become a priority in the instructional preparation of classroom and content area teachers. It is important that teacher education at both the pre-service and in-service levels include experiences that will provide teachers with a strong understanding of vocabulary development through culturally responsive pedagogy. This preparation should provide an array of strategies for teaching individual words and word-learning strategies and an appreciation for the role of word knowledge in vocabulary development.

The primary goal of teacher education through professional development is for student teachers, novice teachers, and experienced teachers to become better educators,

which ultimately benefits the students (Pompa et al., 2011). District leaders must come together to make the best possible decisions to determine professional development needs for teachers and campus administrators. A survey from the district leaders to campus personnel could assist in providing these professional development trainings. The responses gathered would assist the district to better prepare and implement well-conceived long-term professional development programs through PLCs, aimed at enhancing the professional competence of the teachers of ELLs and principals.

In spite of the lack of professional development provided by the district, these teachers noted in their interviews that they researched different strategies and resources to help them deliver effective vocabulary instruction to their students, especially the teachers from HA1. None of the teachers in the study implemented the instructional practice of asking the students *to write the word multiple times* or *to write a list of vocabulary and spelling words to study for a test at the end of the week*. Although these are strategies for word learning, they are considered less effective based on current knowledge and research-based practices for promoting learning with ELLs (Echeverria et al., 2004). It is important to note that some of the participating teachers in the study were teacher leaders or pathfinders in their grade level. Therefore, many grade-level planning periods were spent together to plan for more effective vocabulary instruction. Teachers of English language learners are required to serve as professional resources for other teachers of ELLs, work together with others, and be prepared to persistently practice opportunities to grow in the field of teaching English as a second language (Ellis, 2008).

Moreover, legal obligations require teachers to provide instructional needs for ELLs in very specific and equitable ways. *Lau v. Nichols* was a landmark case for the rights of language minority students, determining that ELLs must be provided with language support in schools, and *Castañeda v. Pickard* upheld that appropriate action must be taken emphasizing the need for designing effective curriculums for these students (Garcia, 2005). Chamot (1998) stated that if all teachers can comprehend that learners achieve more when they create a learning environment of high expectations, recognize their students as capable and interested, and have a positive attitude toward learning, academic achievement will increase.

Not only were the participating teachers frustrated because of the lack of professional development focused on vocabulary development, but they also expressed frustration about time. The teachers shared that they were frustrated for not having enough time to teach the vocabulary skills required, the necessary academic vocabulary per content area, and the necessary knowledge for the students to be successful in state standardized tests and in school altogether. According to Perlmutter (2004), discipline problems, standardized tests, parental negligence, and lack of time are among the highest complaints of teachers (Pompa et al., 2011). District leaders must look into providing the necessary planning periods, with fewer interruptions in order to provide the teachers with ample time to prepare effective vocabulary lessons. “Teachers make better educational decisions when they take the time to learn and understand their students, which in turn leads towards meeting the demands of accountability” (Pompa et al., 2011, p. 120).

Final Recommendations

By discussing answers to the research questions and gathering the themes, this study has produced data that suggest directions for future research about effective vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures for English language learners through a culturally responsive environment. It also identified the important role of empowerment and allowing teachers to make the best educational decisions for the students they serviced, alleviating their frustrations by providing professional development through PLCs at the pre-service and in-service level, monitoring the teaching and the learning, and most importantly, implementing CRT as the major aspect of caring in education. Noddings (2003) clearly stated that people seem to believe that our educational problems consist largely of low scores on achievement tests. She goes on to say,

First we should want more from our educational efforts than adequate academic achievement and, second, we will not achieve even the most minimum success unless our children believe that they themselves are cared for and for our children to learn to care for others. (Noddings, 2003, p. 59)

After the similarities and differences were identified, the case study was concluded as an instrumental case because the research provided learning about the specific issue of the case, which in this study, was identified as the implementation of vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures and not as an intrinsic case that is basically described as an unusual situation (Creswell, 2007, p. 75).

As Nation (1982) and Meara (1996) stated, vocabulary learning is an ongoing process. Being able to remember one meaning of a list of words within a week or two is easy; developing a functional lexicon that contains morphological, semantic, syntactic,

pragmatic, and emotional connections needs a continuing process (Meara, 1996; Nation, 1982). Nonetheless, different aspects of vocabulary learning at different stages of acquisition for different learners in various cultural and educational settings will help us answer so many other research questions beyond the presentation and retention of vocabulary words.

Therefore, what we need is a developmental model that moves us beyond strategies for the initial handling of a list of vocabulary words and gives more emphasis to the hard work of vocabulary acquisition through effective vocabulary procedures and strategies. Professional development through professional learning communities (PLCs) for teachers of ELLs must focus on approaches to acquire vocabulary and different styles of vocabulary acquisition (Parry, 1997). Furthermore, explore how these approaches may relate more to the learner than to the task, and ultimately be more powerful predictors of success than individual vocabulary learning strategies (Gu & Johnson, 1996; Parry, 1997).

Vocabulary learning strategies and procedures for teachers that are supported by school districts through teacher training programs can assist to better meet the needs of students (Crawford, 2003). Building a sense of belonging in students from different backgrounds must be reiterated; doing so helps students, such as ELLs, develop a strong sense of awareness and acceptance, especially when their cultural traits are validated and respected by those around them (Pompa et al., 2011).

REFERENCES

- Abedi, J. (2002). Standardized achievement tests and English language learners: Psychometric issues. *Educational Assessment*, 8, 231-257.
- Adams, M. J., & Collins, A. (1979). A schematic-theoretic view of reading. In R. D. Freedle (Ed.), *New directions in discourse processing* (pp. 1-22). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Addison, A. (1988, July-August). Secondary focus on sheltered content instruction: Adapting core curriculum materials for LEP students. *California Association for Bilingual Education Newsletter*, 13.
- Adger, C. T., Snow, C. E., & Christian, D. (Eds.). (2002). *What teachers need to know about language*. McHenry, IL and Washington, DC: Delta Systems and Center for Applied Linguistics. Retrieved from http://www.cal.org/resources/pubs/what_teachers.html
- Ajideh, P. (2003). Schema theory-based pre-reading tasks: A neglected essential in the ESL reading class. *The Reading Matrix*, 3(1), 1-14.
- Allen, J. (1997). *Words, words, words: Teaching vocabulary in grades 4-12*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse.
- Anderson, K. M. (2007). Tips for teaching: Differentiating instruction to include all students. *Preventing School Failure*, 51(3), 49-54.
- Anderson, R. C., & Nagy, W. E. (1992). The vocabulary conundrum. *American Educator*, 16, 14-18, 44-47.

- Angen, M. J. (2000). Evaluating interpretive inquiry: Reviewing the validity debate and opening the dialogue. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(3), 378-395.
- Anglin, J. M., Miller, G. A., & Wakefield, P. C. (1993). Vocabulary development: A morphological analysis. *Monographs of the society for research in child development*, 1-186.
- Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2011). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Armbruster, B. B. (2010). *Put reading first: The research building blocks for teaching children to read: Kindergarten through grade 3*. Darby, PA: DIANE Publishing.
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L. C., Asghar, R., & Sorenson, C. (2006). *Introduction to research in education* (7th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Asher, J. (2000). Year 2000 update for total physical response. *Language Impact*. Retrieved from <http://www.languageimpact.com/articles/other/ashertpr.htm>
- Au, K. H. (2001). Culturally responsive instruction as a dimension of new literacies. *Reading Online*, 5(1). Retrieved from <http://www.readingonline.org/newliteracies/au/index.html>
- Auerbach, C., La Porte, H. H., & Caputo, R. K. (2004). Statistical methods for estimates of interrater reliability. In A. R. Roberts & K. R. Yeager (Eds.), *Evidence-based practice manual: Research and outcome measures in health and human services* (pp. 444-448). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

- August, D., Carlo, M., Dressler, C., & Snow, C. (2005). The critical role of vocabulary development for English language learners. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 20*(1), 50-57.
- August, D., & Hakuta, K. (Eds.). (1997). *Improving schooling for language-minority children: A research agenda*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- Barcoft, J. (2004). Second language vocabulary acquisition: A lexical input processing approach. *Foreign Language Annals, 37*(2), 200-208.
- Barone, D. M. (2006). *Narrowing the literacy gap—What works in high-poverty schools*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Bartlett, F. C. (1932). *Remembering*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Bartolomé, L. I. (1994). Beyond the methods fetish: Toward a humanizing pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review, 64*(2), 173-194.
- Baumann, J. F., & Kame'enui, E. J. (2004). *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Beck, I. L., & McKeown, M. G. (1991). Conditions of vocabulary acquisition. In R. Barr, M. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook for reading research* (Vol. 2, pp. 789-814). New York, NY: Longman.
- Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2002). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Beck, I. L., McKeown, M. G., & Kucan, L. (2013). *Bringing words to life: Robust vocabulary instruction* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

- Biemiller, A., & Slonim, N. (2001). Estimating root word vocabulary growth in normative and advantaged populations: Evidence for a common sequence of vocabulary acquisition. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 93(3), 498-520.
- Birman, B. F., Desimone, L., Porter, A. C., & Garet, M. (2000). Designing professional development that works. *Educational Leadership*, 57(8), 28-33.
- Blachowicz, C. L. Z., & Fisher, P. (2004). Putting the “fun” back in fundamental. In J. F. Baumann & E. J. Kame’enui (Eds.), *Vocabulary instruction: Research to practice* (pp. 210-238). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Blachowicz, C. L. Z., Fisher, P. J. L., Ogle, D., & Watts-Taffe, S. (2006). Vocabulary: Questions from the classroom. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 41(4), 524-539.
- Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2002). The micro politics of instructional supervision: A call for research. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 38(1), 6-44.
- Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2004). *Handbook of instructional leadership* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Boeije, H. (2009). *Analysis in qualitative research*. London, England: Sage.
- Boulware-Gooden, R., Carreker, S., Thornhill, A., & Joshi, R. M. (2007). Instruction of metacognitive strategies enhances reading comprehension and vocabulary achievement of third-grade students. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(1), 70-77.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Thematic analysis and code development: Transforming qualitative information*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Brown University. (2003). *The knowledge loom: What works in teaching and learning*. Retrieved from <http://www.knowledgeloom.org>

- Bryk, A. S., Camburn, E., & Louis, K. S. (1999). Professional community in Chicago elementary schools: Facilitating factors and organizational consequences. *Education Administration Quarterly*, 35, 751-781.
- Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. L. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Buteau, G., & True, M. (2009). Differentiating instructional strategies to support English language learners. *The NERA Journal*, 44, 23-25.
- Capps, R., Fix, M., Murray, J., Passel, J. S., & Herwantoro, S. (2005). *The new demography of America's schools: Immigration and the No Child Left Behind Act*. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
- Carlo, M. S., August, D., McLaughlin, B., Snow, C. E., Dressler, C., & Lippman, D. N. (2004). Closing the gap: Addressing the vocabulary needs of English-language learners in bilingual and mainstream classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 39(2), 188-215.
- Carlo, M. S., August, D., & Snow, C. E. (2005). Sustained vocabulary-learning strategies for English language learners. In E. H. Hiebert & M. Kamil (Eds.), *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice* (pp. 137-153). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Carrasquillo, A., & Rodríguez, V. (2002). *Language minority students in the mainstream classroom* (2nd ed.). Clevedon, England: Cromwell Press Limited.
- Carrell, P. L. (1984). Evidence of a formal schema in second language comprehension. *Language Learning*, 34(2), 87-112.

- Carrell, P. L., & Eisterhold, J. C. (1983). Schema theory and ESL reading. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17(4), 553-573.
- Carrell, P. L., & Floyd, P. (1987). Effects on ESL reading of teaching cultural content schemata. *Language Learning*, 37, 88-108.
- Center for Public Education. (2006, March 15). *A guide to the No Child Left Behind Act*. Retrieved from <http://www.centerforpubliceducation.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=lvIXIiN0JwE&b=5125033&ct=6857877>
- Chamot, A. U. (1998). Effective instruction for high school English language learners. In R. Gersten & R. Jiménez (Eds.), *Promoting learning for culturally and linguistically diverse students: Classroom applications from contemporary research* (pp. 187-209). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Christian, D. (1994). Two-way immersion education: Students learning through two languages. *The Modern Language Journal*, 80(1), 66-76.
- Coady, M., Hamann, E. T., Harrington, M., Pacheco, M., Pho, S., & Yedlin, J. (2003). *Claiming opportunities: Handbook for improving education for English language learners through comprehensive school reform*. Providence, RI: Brown University, Educational Alliance.
- Collier, V. (1995). *Promoting academic success for ESL students*. Elizabeth, NJ: New Jersey Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages—Bilingual Education.
- Cortiella, C. (2009). No Child Left Behind and students with learning disabilities: Opportunities and obstacles. Great schools involved parents, successful kids.

Great Schools. Retrieved from <http://www.greatschools.net/cgi-bin/showarticle/2747>

Craig, D. (2009). *Action research essentials*. Oxford, England: John Wiley & Sons.

Crawford, A. (2003). Communicative approaches to second-language acquisition: The bridge to second-language literacy. In G. Garcia (Ed.), *English learners: Reaching the highest level of English literacy* (pp. 152-181). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative & quantitative approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cryer, P. (2006). *The research student's guide to success*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill International.

Cummins, C. (2006). *Understanding and implementing reading first initiatives: The changing role of administrators*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, The National Council of Teachers of English.

- Cummins, J. (1979). Cognitive/academic language proficiency, linguistic interdependence, the optimum age question and some other matters! *Working Papers on Bilingualism*, 19, 121-129.
- Cummins, J. (1981). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. In California State Department of Education (Ed.), *Schooling and language minority students: A theoretical framework* (pp. 3-49). Los Angeles, CA: California State University, Evaluation, Dissemination, and Assessment Center.
- Cummins, J. (1982). Tests, achievement, and bilingual students. *Focus*. Rosslyn, VA: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.
- Cummins, J. (2003). Reading and the bilingual student: Fact and friction. In G. G. Garcia (Ed.), *English learners: Reaching the highest level of English literacy* (pp. 2-33). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Curtin, M., & Fossey, E. (2007). Appraising the trustworthiness of qualitative studies: Guidelines for occupational therapists. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 54(2), 88-94.
- DeWalt, K. M., & DeWalt, B. R. (2002). *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide: For small social research projects*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill International.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. (1998). *Collecting and interpreting qualitative materials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Díaz-Rico, L. T., & Weed, K. Z. (2005). *The cross cultural, language, and academic development handbook*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- DuFour, R. (2004). What is a professional learning community? *Educational Leadership*, 61(8), 6-11.
- Echevarria, J. (1995). Sheltered instruction for students with learning disabilities who have limited English proficiency. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 30(5), 302-305.
- Echevarria, J., & Graves, A. (2003). *Sheltered content instruction: Teaching English language learners with diverse abilities*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Echevarria, J., Short, D., & Powers, K. (2006). School reform and standards-based education: A model for English language learners. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 99(4), 195-210.
- Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. J. (2004). *Making content comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP model*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Education Trust. (2003, September). *Disaggregated data and NCLB: What's required to be publicly reported and by when*. Retrieved from <http://www.ewa.org/docs/disagdata.pdf>
- Electronic Registrar Online (ERO). (2013). *Report about vocabulary trainings for professionals and paraprofessional of the district*. Retrieved from <http://www.eschoolsolutions.com>
- Elley, W. B. (1988). Vocabulary acquisition from listening to stories. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 24, 174-187.

- Elliot, J., & Thurlow, M. (2006). *Improving test performance of students with disabilities on district and state assessments* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Ellis, N. C. (1994). Vocabulary acquisition: The implicit ins and outs of explicit cognitive mediation. In N. C. Ellis (Ed.), *Implicit and explicit learning of languages* (pp. 211-282). London, England: Academic Press.
- Ellis, N. C. (1997). Vocabulary acquisition: Word structure, collocation, word-class, and meaning. In N. Schmitt & M. McCarthy (Eds.), *Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy* (pp. 122-139). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Ellis, R. (2008). Sociocultural theory and second language acquisition. In R. Ellis (Ed.), *The study of second language acquisition* (2nd ed., pp. 517-554). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Epstein, J. (2003). Creating school, family, and community partnerships. In A. C. Ornstein, L. S. Behar-Horenstein, & E. F. Pajak (Eds.), *Contemporary issues in curriculum* (pp. 354-373). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Erickson, F., & Shultz, J. (1991). Students' experience of the curriculum. In P. W. Jackson (Ed.), *Handbook of research on curriculum*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Feldman, K., & Kinsella, K. (2003). *Narrowing the language gap: Strategies for vocabulary development*. Santa Barbara, CA: Sonoma County Office of Education.

- Feldman, K., & Kinsella, K. (2005). Narrowing the language gap: The case for explicit vocabulary instruction. *Scholastic*, 1-18. Retrieved from <http://www.sbceo.org/~ab430/pdfs/NarrowingLanguageGapR.pdf>
- Fillmore, L. W., & Snow, C. (2002). What teachers need to know about language? In C. T. Adger, C. E. Snow, & D. Christian (Eds.), *What teachers need to know about language* (pp. 7-53). McHenry, IL: Delta Systems and Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Fisher, P. J. L., & Danielsén, D. (1998). When fourth-graders select their own words for spelling and vocabulary. In L. Wedwick & R. K. Moss (Eds.), *Conversations: Teacher research in literacy learning* (pp. 23-27). Bloomington, IL: Illinois Reading Council.
- Flanigan, K., & Greenwood, S. C. (2007). Effective content vocabulary instruction in the middle: Matching students, purposes, words, and strategies. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 51(3), 226-238.
- Florian, L., & McLaughlin, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Disability classification in education: Issues and perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Folse, K. S. (2004). *Vocabulary myths: Applying second language research to classroom teaching*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Fraenkel, J., & Wallen, N. (2006). *How to design and evaluate research in education?* (6th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Freyer, D., Frederick, W. C., & Klausmeier, H. J. (1969). *A schema for testing the level of cognitive mastery*. Madison, WI: Wisconsin Center for Education Research.

- Freeman, D., & Freeman, Y. (1994). *Essential linguistics: What you need to know to teach reading, ESL, spelling, phonics, and grammar*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Fuchs, L. S., & Fuchs, D. (2002). *What is scientifically-based research on progress monitoring?* (Technical report). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University.
- Fukkink, R. G., & deGlopper, K. (1998). Effects of instruction in deriving word meaning from context: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 68, 450-469.
- Fullan, M. (2006, November). Leading professional learning. *The School Administrator*. Retrieved from <http://www.aasa.rd.net/publications/saarticledetail.cfm?mnitemnumber=&tnitemnumber=&itemnumber=7565&unitemnumber=&pf=1&snitemnumber=>
- Garcia, E. E. (2005). *Teaching and learning in two languages*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Garcia, G. E. (1991). Factors influencing the English reading test performance of Spanish-speaking Hispanic children. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 26, 371-392.
- Garcia, G. E. (1996, December). *Improving the English reading of Mexican-American bilingual students through the use of cognate recognition strategies*. Paper presented at the National Reading Conference, Charleston, SC.
- Garcia, S., & Dominguez, L. (1997). Cultural contexts that influence learning and academic performance. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 6(3), 621-655.

- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Genesee, F. (1987). *Learning through two languages: Studies of immersion and bilingual education*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Genesee, F. (Ed.). (1999). *Program alternatives for linguistically and culturally diverse students* (Educational Practice Report No. 1). Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.
- Gersten, R., & Woodward, J. (1995). A longitudinal study of transitional and immersion bilingual education programs in one district. *The Elementary School Journal*, 95(3), 223-239.
- Gersten, R., Baker, S. K., Shanahan, T., Linan-Thompson, S., Collins, P., & Scarcella, R. (2007). *Effective literacy and English language instruction for English learners in the elementary grades: A practice guide* (NCEE 2007-4011). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences. Retrieved from <http://www.ies.ed.gov/ncee>
- Gettinger, M., & Seibert, J. K. (2002). Best practices in increasing academic learning time. *Best Practices in School Psychology IV, 1*, 773-787.
- Goldenberg, C. (2011). Reading instruction for English language learners. In M. L. Kamil, P. D. Pearson, E. B. Moje, & P. P. Afflerbach (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 4, pp. 684-710). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Goldenberg, C., Rezaei, A., & Fletcher, J. (2005, May). *Home use of English and Spanish and Spanish-speaking children's oral language and literacy achievement*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the International Reading Association, San Antonio, TX.
- Good, T. L., & Brophy, J. E. (2000). *Looking in classrooms* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Longman.
- Gough, P. H., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading and reading disability. *Remedial and Special Education*, 7, 6-10.
- Graves, M. F. (2007). Vocabulary instruction in the middle grades. *Voices from the Middle*, 15(1), 13-19.
- Graves, M. F. (2008). Instruction on individual words: One size does not fit all. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about vocabulary instruction* (pp. 56-79). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Graves, M. F. (2009). *Teaching individual words*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Greenwood, S. C., & Flanigan, K. (2007). Overlapping vocabulary and comprehension: Context clues complement semantic gradients, *Reading Teacher*, 61(3), 249-254.
- Grognet, A., Jameson, J., Franco, L., & Derrick-Mescua, M. (2000). *Enhancing English language learning in elementary classrooms*. McHenry, IL: Delta Systems.
- Gu, P. Y. (2003). Vocabulary learning in a second language: Person, task, context and strategies. *TESL-EJ*, 7(2), 1-25.

- Gu, Y., & Johnson, R. K. (1996). Vocabulary learning strategies and language learning outcomes. *Language Learning*, 46, 643-679.
- Hale, J. E. (2001). *Learning while Black*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1998). Exploring the principal's contribution to school effectiveness: 1980-1995. *School Effectiveness & School Improvement*, 9(2), 157.
- Hansen, L. (2006). Strategies for ELL success. *Science and Children*, 43(4), 22-25.
- Hardman, M. L., & Dawson, S. (2008). The impact of Federal public policy on curriculum and instruction for students with disabilities in the general classroom. *Preventing School Failure*, 52(2), 5-11. Retrieved from Research Library database. (Document ID: 1428355731).
- Hardy, M., & Bryman, A. (2009). *Handbook of data analysis*. London, England: Sage.
- Harmon, J. M., Wood, K. D., & Hedrick, W. B. (2008). Vocabulary instruction in middle and secondary content classrooms: Understandings and direction from research. In A. E. Farstrup & S. J. Samuels (Eds.), *What research has to say about vocabulary instruction* (pp. 150-181). Newark, DE: International Reading Association.
- Heistad, D. (1997, May). *Teachers who beat the odds: Value-added reading instruction in Minneapolis Public Schools second grade classrooms*. Minneapolis, MN: Minneapolis Public Schools.

- Hemphill, F. C., & Vanneman, A. (2011). *Achievement gaps: How Hispanic and White students in public schools perform in mathematics and reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress* (NCES 2011-459). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.
- Henderson, N., & Milstein, M. M. (2003). *Resiliency in the schools: Making it happen for students and educators*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Herrera, S. G., Kavimandan, S. K., & Holmes, M. A. (2011). *Crossing the vocabulary bridge: Differentiated strategies for diverse secondary classrooms*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hess, F. M., & Petrilli, M. J. (2009, February/March). Wrong turn on school reform. *Policy Review, 153 ABI/Inform Global*, 55-68.
- Hiebert, E. H. (2005). In pursuit of an effective, efficient vocabulary curriculum for elementary students. In E. H. Hiebert & M. L. Kamil (Eds.), *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.
- Hill, J. D., & Bjork, C. L. (2008). *Classroom instruction that works with English language learners: Participant's workbook*. Denver, CO: Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning.
- Hoover, J. J., & Patton, J. R. (2005). Differentiating curriculum and instruction for English-language learners with special needs. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 40*(4), 231-235.

- Huckin, T., & Coady, J. (1999). Incidental vocabulary acquisition in a second language: A review. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 21, 181-193.
- Humes, K. R., Jones, N. A., & Ramírez, R. R. (2011). *Overview of race and Hispanic origin: 2010* (C2010BR-02). Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>
- Husty, S., & Jackson, J. (2008). Multisensory strategies for science vocabulary. *Science and Children*, 46(4), 32-35.
- International Reading Association. (2001). *Position statement on second language-literacy instruction*. Retrieved from http://www.reading.org/Libraries/Position_Statements_and_Resolutions/ps1046_second_language.sflb.ashx
- Jacobsen, D. A., Eggen, P., & Kauchak, D. (2006). *Methods for teaching: Promoting student learning in K-12 classrooms* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill-Prentice Hall.
- Jimenez, R. T., Garcia, G. E., & Pearson, P. D. (1996). The reading strategies of bilingual Latina/o students who are successful English readers: Opportunities and obstacles. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 31, 90-112.
- Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2012). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Kamil, M. L., & Hiebert, E. H. (2005). Teaching and learning vocabulary: Perspectives and persistent issues. In E. H. Hiebert & M. L. Kamil (Eds.), *Teaching and learning vocabulary: Bringing research to practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.

- Kauffman, D., Sheppard, K., Burkart, G., Peyton, J., & Short, D. (1995). *Content-ESL across the USA* (Vol. II, Tech. Rep.). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.
- Keesor, C. A. (2005). Administrative visibility and its effect on classroom behavior. *NAESP*, 89(643), 64-73.
- Kessler, C. (1991). *Cooperative language learning: A teacher's resource book*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Klesius, J. P., & Searls, E. F. (1990). A meta-analysis of recent research in meaning vocabulary instruction. *Journal of Research and Development in Education*, 23, 226-235.
- Kohn, A. (2000, September). Standardized testing and its victims. *Education Week*. Retrieved from <http://www.alfiekohn.org/article/standardized-testing-victims/>
- Kolk, M. (2011). *Making Clymation in the classroom*. *Tech4Learning*. Retrieved from http://www.tech4learning.com/userfiles/file/pdfs/Frames/Making_Claymation_in_the_Classroom.pdf
- Kozol, J. (1991). *Savage inequalities: Children in America's schools*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial.
- Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The input hypothesis: Issues and implications*. London, England: Longman.
- Krashen, S. D. (1989). We acquire vocabulary and spelling by reading: Additional evidence for the input hypothesis. *The Modern Language Journal*, 24, 237-270.

- Krashen, S. D., Long, M., & Scarcella, R. (1979). Age, rate and eventual attainment in second language acquisition. *TESOL Quarterly* 13(4), 573-582.
- Krashen, S. D., & Terrell, T. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. Oxford, England: Pergamon.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). "But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy." *Theory Into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165.
- Lane, K. (2007, November). Identifying and supporting students at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders within multi-level models: Data-driven approaches to conducting secondary interventions with and academic emphasis. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 30(4), 135-164.
- Lauer, P. A., Palmer, E., Van Buhler, R., & Fries, D. (2002). *The influence of teacher learning on student achievement, revised*. Aurora, CO: Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning.
- Lavadenz, M. (1994). *The role of paraprofessionals in the instruction of limited English proficient students* (Rep. No. ED 368206). Los Angeles, CA: Loyola Marymount University.
- Lehr, F., Osborn, J., & Hiebert, E. H. (2004). *A focus on vocabulary*. Honolulu, HI: Pacific Resources for Education and Learning.
- Lessow-Hurley, J. (2000). *The foundations of dual language instruction*. New York, NY: Longman.

- Lightbown, P. M., & Spada, N. (2006). *How languages are learned* (3rd ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lindholm, K. (1990). Bilingual immersion education: Criteria for program development. In A. Padilla, H. Fairchild, & C. Valadez (Eds.), *Bilingual education: Issues and strategies* (pp. 91-105). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lindholm, K., & Gavlek, K. (1994). *California DBE projects: Project-wide evaluation report, 1992-1993*. San Jose, CA: Author.
- Lugo-Neris, M. J., Jackson, C. W., & Goldstein, H. (2010). Facilitating vocabulary acquisition of young English language learners. *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools, 41*(3), 314-327.
- Manyak, P. C. (2007). A framework for robust literacy instruction for English learners. *The Reading Teacher, 61*(2), 197-199.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2006). *Designing qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Marzano, R. J. (2000). *A quantitative synthesis of research on school-level, teacher-level, and student-level variables related to academic achievement*. [REL Deliverable 2000-05]. Aurora, CO: Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning.
- Marzano, R. J. (2004). *Building background knowledge of academic achievement: Research on what works in schools*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

- Marzano, R. J. (2009). *Teaching basic and advanced vocabulary: A framework for direct instruction*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Marzano, R. J., & Pickering, D. J. (2005). *Building academic vocabulary: Teacher's manual*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to practice*. Alexandria, VA: Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Maxwell, J. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McCarthy, M. J. (1984). A new look at vocabulary in EFL. *Applied Linguistics*, 5, 12-22.
- McCarthy, M. J. (1990). *Vocabulary*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- McKeown, M. G., Beck, I. L., & Blake, R. G. (2009). Rethinking reading comprehension instruction: A comparison of instruction for strategies and content approaches. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 44(3), 218-253.
- McKeown, M. G., Beck, I. L., Omanson, R. C., & Perfetti, C. A. (1983). The effects of long-term vocabulary instruction on reading comprehension: A replication. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 15(1), 3-18.
- McKinsey & Company. (2009, April). *The economic impact of the achievement gap in America's schools: Summary of findings*. Retrieved from

http://www.mckinsey.com/App_Media/Images/Page_Images/Offices/SocialSector/PDF/achievement_gap_report.pdf

- McLaughlin, M. (2010). *Content area reading: Teaching and learning in an age of multiple literacies*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Meara, P. (1996). The classical research in L2 vocabulary acquisition. In G. Anderman & M. Rogers (Eds.), *Words, words, words: The translator and the language learner* (pp. 27-40). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion analysis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Minicucci, C., Berman, P., McLaughlin, B., McLeod, B., Nelson, B., & Woodworth, K. (1995). School reform and school diversity. *Phi Delta Kappa*, 77, 77-80.
- Mohr, K. A. J. (2004). English as an accelerated language: A call to action for reading teachers. *The Reading Teacher*, 58(1), 18-26.
- Moss, M., & Puma, M. (1995). *Prospects: The congressionally mandated study of educational growth and opportunity* (First-year report on language minority and limited English proficient students). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

- Munson, B., Kurtz, B. A., & Windsor, J. (2005). The influence of vocabulary size, phonotactic probability, and word likeness on non-word repetitions of children with and without specific language impairment. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 48(5), 1033-1047.
- Nagy, W. E., & Scott, J. A. (2000). Vocabulary processes. In M. L. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, P. D. Pearson, & R. Barr (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 3, pp. 269-284). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1982). Beginning to learn foreign vocabulary: A review of the research. *RELJ Journal*, 13, 14-36.
- Nation, I. S. P. (1990). *Teaching and learning vocabulary*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2002). *Schools and staffing survey, 1999-2000. Overview of the data for public, private, public charter, and Bureau of Indian Affairs elementary and secondary schools*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2004). *The condition of education*. Retrieved from <http://www.nces.ed.gov/programs/coe>
- National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. (2006). *How has the English language learner population changed recent years?* Washington, DC: NCELA. Retrieved from <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/expert/faq/08leps.html>
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2000). Report of the National Reading Panel. *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based*

- assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- National Reading Panel (NRP). (2000, December). *Teaching children to read: An evidence-based assessment of the scientific research literature on reading and its implications for reading instruction* (NIH Publication No. 00-4769). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.
- National Staff Development Council. (2001). *Standards for staff development* (Rev.). Oxford, OH: Author.
- Nelson, G. L. (1995). Cultural differences in learning styles. In J. M. Reid (Ed.), *Learning styles in the ESL/EFL classroom* (pp. 3-18). New York, NY: Heinle & Heinle.
- Neuman, S. B. (1999). Books make a difference: A study to access literacy. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 34(3), 286-311.
- Nieto, S. (2000). Bringing bilingual education out of the basement and other imperatives for teacher education. In Z. Beykont (Ed.), *Lifting every voice: Pedagogy and politics of bilingual education* (pp. 187-207). Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002).
- Noddings, N. (2003). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education* (2nd ed.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Ovando, C. J., & Collier, V. P. (1985). *Bilingual and ESL classrooms: Teaching in multicultural contexts*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Padrón, Y. N., Waxman, H. C., & Huang, S. L. (1999). Classroom and instructional learning environment differences between resilient and non-resilient elementary school students. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk of Failure*, 4, 63-81.
- Padrón, Y. N., Waxman, H. C., & Rivera, H. H. (2003). Educating Hispanic students: Obstacles and avenues to improved academic achievement. *Educational Research Service Spectrum*, 21(2), 27-39. Arlington, VA: ERS.
- Pang, E. S., & Kamil, M. L. (2004). *Second-language issues in early literacy and instruction* (Publication Series No. 1). Philadelphia, PA: Mid-Atlantic Lab for Student Success.
- Paribakht, T. S., & Wesche, M. (1997). Vocabulary enhancement activities and reading for meaning in second language vocabulary acquisition. In J. Coady & T. Huckin (Eds.), *Second language vocabulary acquisition: A rationale for pedagogy* (pp. 174-199). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Parry, K. (1997). Vocabulary and comprehension: Two portraits. In J. Coady & T. Huckin (Eds.), *Second language vocabulary acquisition: A rationale for pedagogy* (pp. 55-68). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Pearson, P. D., & Fielding, L. (1991). Comprehension instruction. In R. Barr, M. L. Kamil, P. Mosenthal, & P. D. Pearson (Eds.), *Handbook of reading research* (Vol. 2, pp. 815-860). White Plains, NY: Longman.

- Peregoy, S. F. (1991). Environmental scaffolds and learner responses in a two-way Spanish immersion kindergarten. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 47(3), 463-476.
- Peregoy, S. F., & Boyle, O. F. (2005). *Reading, writing, & learning in ESL: A resource book for K-12 teachers*. London, England: Longman.
- Perlmutter, D. D. (2004). What works when students and teachers both misbehave? *Education Digest*, 70(1), 48-52.
- Pickett, A. L. (1999). *Paraeducators: Factors that influence their performance, development and supervision*. Reston, VA: ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education. Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED437767)
- Pompa, C., Higareda, S., Treviño, C., & Guerra, C. (2011). “But I’m just their teacher—Why should I care?” The effects of a caring centered environment in the literacy achievement of ELLs. *Journal of Border Educational Research*, 9, 113-122.
- Posner, G. J., & Rudnitsky, A. N. (2001). *Course design: A guide to curriculum development for teachers*. New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.
- President’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education. (2002). *A new era: Revitalizing special education for children and their families* (No. ED-02-PO-0791). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Protheroe, N. (2009). Using classroom walkthroughs to improve instruction. *Principal*, 88(4), 30-34.
- Ramírez, J. D., Yuen, S. D., & Ramey, D. R. (1991). *Final report: Longitudinal study of structured immersion strategy, early-exit, and late-exit transitional bilingual*

- education programs for language-minority children*. San Mateo, CA: Aguirre International.
- Reeves, D. (2008). The learning leader: Looking deeper into the data. *Educational Leadership*, 66(4), 89-90.
- Reynolds, J., Dale, G., & Moore, J. (1989). *How to plan and implement a two-way Spanish immersion program*. Sacramento, CA: California State Department of Education.
- Rhodes, R. L., Ochoa, S. H., & Ortiz, S. O. (2005). *Assessing culturally and linguistically diverse students: A practical guide*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Richardson, J. (2005, November/December). Transform your group into a team. *Tools for Schools*, 9(2), 1-8.
- Roberts, T. A. (2005). Articulation accuracy and vocabulary size contributions to phonemic awareness and word reading in English language learners. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 97(4), 601-606.
- Rogers, D. L. & Webb, J. (1991). The ethic of caring in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 42(3), 173-181.
- Routman, R. (2012). Mapping a pathway to school wide highly effective teaching. *Kappan Magazine*, 93(5), 56-61.
- Rueda, R., & Garcia, G. (2001). *How do I teach reading to ELLs? Ninth in a series: Teaching every child to read*. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement.

- Rueda, R., Monzo, L., & Higareda, I. (2004). Appropriating sociocultural resources of Latino paraeducators for effective instruction with Latino students: Promises and problems. *Urban Education*, 39(1), 52-90.
- Sanacore, J., & Palumbo, A. (2009). Understanding the fourth-grade slum: Our point of view. *The Educational Forum*, 73(1), 67-74.
- Santoro, L. E., Chard, D. J., Howard, L., & Baker, S. K. (2008). Making the very most of classroom read-alouds to promote comprehension and vocabulary. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(5), 396-408.
- Scarcella, R. (2003). *Academic English: A conceptual framework*. Irvine, CA: University of California, Irvine.
- Schmidt, P. R. (1995). Working and playing with others: Cultural conflict in a Rothsteinn kindergarten literacy program. *The Reading Teacher*, 48, 404-412.
- Schram, T. H. (2006). *Conceptualizing and proposing qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Columbus, OH: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Shank, G. D. (2006). *Qualitative research: A personal skills approach*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Sheppard, K. (1995). *Content-ESL across the USA* (Vol. 1, Tech. Rep.). Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.
- Shipman, M. (1997). *The limitations of social research*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Shorr, P. (2006, August). Teaching America's immigrants. *Instructor Magazine*, pp. 46-53.

- Short, D. (1991). *How to integrate language and content instruction: A training manual*. Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Short, D. (2002). Language learning in sheltered social studies classes. *TESOL Journal*, 11(1), 18-24.
- Silverman, D. (2001). *Interpreting qualitative data* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Silverman, R. (2007). Vocabulary development of English-language and English-only learners in kindergarten. *The Elementary School Journal*, 107(4), 365-383.
- Slavin, R. E. (1995). *Cooperative learning: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Snow, C. E. (1991). The theoretical basis for relationships between language and literacy in development. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 6, 5-10.
- Snow, C. E., & Biancarosa, G. (2003). *Adolescent literacy and the achievement gap: What do we know and where do we go from here?* New York, NY: Carnegie Corporation of New York.
- Snow, C. E., & Kim, Y. (2007). Large problem spaces: The challenge of vocabulary for English language learners. In R. K. Wagner, A. E. Muse, & K. R. Tannenbaum (Eds.), *Vocabulary acquisition: Implications for reading comprehension* (pp. 123-139). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Spencer, B. H., & Guillaume, A. M. (2006). Integrating curriculum through the learning cycle: Content-based reading and vocabulary instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 60(3), 206-219.

- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Stahl, S. A. (1999). *Vocabulary development*. Cambridge, MA: Brookline Books.
- Stahl, S. A., & Fairbanks, M. M. (1986). The effects of vocabulary instruction: A model-based meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 56, 72-110.
- Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Strong, M., Fletcher, S., & Villar, A. (2004). *An investigation of the effects of teacher experience and teacher preparedness on the performance of Latino students in California*. Santa Cruz, CA: New Teacher Center.
- Swain, M., & Lapkin, S. (1989). Aspects of the sociolinguistic performance of early and late French immersion students. In R. Scarcella, E. Anderson, & S. Krashen (Eds.), *On the development of communicative competence in a second language* (pp. 41-54). Cambridge, MA: Newbury House.
- Tabors, P., & Snow, C. (2001). Young bilingual children and early literacy development. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research* (pp. 159-178). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Tallerico, M. (2005). *Supporting and sustaining teacher professional development: A principal's guide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Taylor, S. (1992). Victor: A case study of a Cantonese child in early French immersion. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 48(4), 736-759.
- Teddlie, C., & Reynolds, D. (2000). *The international handbook of school effectiveness research*. New York, NY: Falmer Press.

- Texas Education Agency. (2012-2013). *Texas Academic Performance Report*. Austin, TX: TEA Division of Performance Reporting.
- Texas Education Agency. (2013). *TEA division of accountability ratings criteria and targets manual*. Austin, TX: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.ritter.tea.state.tx.us/perfreport/account/2013/manual/ch03.pdf>
- Tharp, R., Estrada, P., Dalton, S., & Yamaguchi, L. (2000). *Teaching transformed: Achieving excellence, fairness, inclusion and harmony*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Thomas, W., & Collier, V. (2002). *A national study of school effectiveness for language minority students' long-term academic achievement* (Final report). Santa Cruz, CA: Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Tompkins, G. (2003). *Literacy for the 21st century: Teaching reading and writing in pre-kindergarten through grade 4*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Trochim, W. K., & Donnelly, J. P. (2008). *Research methods knowledge base* (3rd ed.). Mason, OH: Cengage Learning.
- Tuckett, A. G. (2005). Part II: Rigor in qualitative research: Complexities and solutions. *Nurse Researcher*, 13(1), 29-42.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2013). *Census of population and housing 2010*. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

- U.S. Department of Education. (2007). *The condition of education 2007* (NCES No. 2007-064). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from <http://www.nces.ed.gov/publs2007/2007064.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2015). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2013* (NCES 2015-011), Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- U.S. Department of Education, & National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. (2003). *National symposium on learning disabilities in English language learners. Symposium summary*. Washington, DC: Authors.
- Vacca, J., & Vacca, R. (2003). *Reading and learning to read* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.
- Vacca, R. T., & Vacca, J. L. (2007). *Content area reading: Literacy and learning across the curriculum* (9th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Valenzuela, A. (1999). *Subtractive schooling*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- VanDeWeghe, R. (2007). What about vocabulary instruction? *English Journal*, 97(1), 101-104.
- Verhoeven, L. T. (1990). Acquisition of reading in a second language. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 25, 90-114.
- Vitale, M. R., & Romance, N. R. (2008). Broadening perspectives about vocabulary instruction: Implications for classroom practice. *New England Reading Association Journal*, 44(1), 15-22.

- Vogt, M. E. (2000). Content learning for students needing modifications: An issue of access. In M. McLaughlin & M. E. Vogt (Eds.), *Creativity and innovation in content area teaching* (pp. 329-351). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon.
- Wainer, A. (2004). *The new Latino south and the challenge to public education: Strategies for educators and policymakers in emerging immigrant communities*. Los Angeles, CA: Tomás Rivera Policy Institute, University of Southern California.
- Walberg, H. J. (1991). Productive teaching and instruction: Assessing the knowledge base. In H. C. Waxman & H. J. Walberg (Eds.), *Effective teaching: Current research*. Berkeley, CA: McCutchan.
- Walberg, H. J. (1995). Generic practices. In G. Cawelt (Ed.), *Handbook of research on improving student achievement*. Arlington, VA: Educational Research Services.
- Wallace, C. (2007). Vocabulary: The key to teaching English language learners to read. *Reading Improvement*, 44(4), 189-192.
- Walsh, B. (2009). Quantity, quality, children's characteristics and vocabulary learning. *Childhood Education*, 84(3), 163-166.
- Watkins, D. A., & Biggs, J. B. (Eds.). (1996). *The Chinese learner: Cultural, psychological and contextual influences*. Hong Kong and Melbourne: Comparative Education Research Centre, University of Hong Kong, and the Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd.

- White, T. G., Graves, M. F., & Slater, W. H. (1990). Growth of reading vocabulary in diverse elementary schools: Decoding and word meaning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 82, 281-290.
- Whitehurst, G. J., & Lonigan, C. J. (2001). Child development and emergent literacy. *Child Development*, 69, 848-872.
- Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.
- Wilfong, L. G. (2013). *Vocabulary strategies that work: Do this, not that!* Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
- Willis, A. I., & Harris, V. (2000). Political acts: Literacy learning and teaching. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 35(1), 72-88.
- Wood, K., Harmon, J., & Hedrick, W. (2004). Recommendations from research for teaching vocabulary to diverse learners. *Middle School Journal*, 35(5), 57-63.
- Yell, M. (2006). *The law and special education* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Yi, X., & Zhang, D. (2006). A psychological analysis of English reading difficulty of Chinese college students. *College of Foreign Languages Jilian University*, 1-15.
Retrieved from <http://www.aare.edu.au/06pap/yi06855.pdf>
- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and method* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research—Design and methods* (4th ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

- Zajda, J. (2009, November). *Race, ethnicity, and gender in education: Cross-cultural understandings*. Paper presented at the AARE (Canberra), Australian Catholic University (Melbourne Campus).
- Zehler, A., Fleischman, H., Hopstock, P., Stephenson, T., Pendzick, M., & Sapru, S. (2003). *Policy report: Summary of findings related to LEP and SPED-LEP students* (Report submitted to U.S. Department of Education, Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement of Limited English Proficient Students). Arlington, VA: Development Associates.
- Zepeda, S. J. (2008). *Professional development: What works*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
- Zimmerman, C. B. (1994). *Self-selected reading and interactive vocabulary instruction: Knowledge and perceptions of word learning among L2 learners* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW/RESEARCH AGREEMENT

Date: February 27, 2014

Name: Carmen Amparo Pompa

Address: 216 Lake Powell Dr.

City, St., Zip: Laredo, Texas 78041

Telephone: 956-235-1520 (cell); 956-568-0059 (home)

Fax: n/a

E-Mail: cpompa@tamu.edu

1. Study Title: A Comparison of English Vocabulary Instruction for English Language Learners: In Three Elementary Schools from a U.S.-Mexico Border Community.
2. Participants and procedures in the study: During my first visit, I plan to individually interview the principals, and thus ask for recommendations (or to randomly select) from the principal, 18 teachers at each of the three schools. For the next visits, I will conduct 5 classroom observations with ranges of 25 to 45 minutes in a two-month period of time. After the classroom observations have been completed I will individually interview the 18 teachers from the three different campuses, transcribe and member-check for validity purposes. Student artifacts will also be collected through photographs to include in the case study as evidence of student projects created based on vocabulary. In addition, in order to protect the students and their confidentiality the names of the students will not be visible in any photograph of the artifacts collected.

3. Proposal Abstract:

This study is a comparative investigation of English vocabulary instruction for English language learners. Three elementary schools from a U.S.-Mexico border community were chosen purposely and studied using qualitative research methods.

The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast vocabulary instructional strategies that promoted academic reading achievement in the STAAR reading assessment with ELLs among two high-achieving schools and one low-achieving elementary school as measured by the Texas Education Agency.

The participants in this qualitative study consisted of 18 teachers: 6 teachers per campus and 3 principals. The methods of data collection were classroom observations, student artifacts

and one-on-one teacher interviews. Data were utilized, coded, categorized, and compared to create emerging themes. The narrative data provided stories of empowerment in education, frustrations about their education, monitoring of education and caring in education.

According to these 18 teachers, teaching vocabulary is not an easy task, especially not for English language learners. Because teachers understand that accountability measures are designed to ensure that all students in the United States, including those who speak languages other than English, meet state and national reading and writing standards, there is no time to waste. This study highlighted the strengths of these teachers to provide effective vocabulary instruction for ELLs and how they coped with identified frustrations in their pedagogy in order to assist ELLs to achieve academic reading success.

4. Major hypotheses or questions to be tested:

The questions that will guide my research are:

1. What are the vocabulary instructional procedures identified from the classroom observations, the student artifacts, and the teacher interviews in the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?
 2. Is there evidence of culturally responsive teaching among the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school?
 3. Are there differences and similarities among vocabulary instructional strategies and procedures evidenced from the teacher interviews in each of the two high-achieving schools and the low-achieving school? And if so, what are they?
5. Attached copies of interview and classroom observation data collection protocols.
6. Desired timeline: After approval of my record of study proposal by my committee, I hope to begin collecting data at the beginning March 2014. Dependent on campus schedules, my plan is to complete all data collection by the end of May 2014. This includes the initial individual interviews with principals, classroom observations at each school and individual interviews with teachers. I will then transcribe, code, and analyze the data collected into themes. Finalize chapters 4 and 5. Defend my record of study by September 2015 and Graduate in December 2015.
7. I plan to inductively code the data from each interview, classroom observation and student artifacts collected, and identifying vocabulary instructional themes as they emerge. I will first organize all of the transcribed data according to an analytic matrix. The matrix, organized by interview question and categorized by research question, will allow for single-case analysis (each school), as well as cross-case analysis (all three schools). All data will be secured and participants will be informed that all information collected is confidential.

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT SELECTION DATA SHEET (PRINCIPAL)

1. Please identify two teachers for 3rd, 4th and 5th grades and one alternate. We also need to identify their gender, ethnicity, current position, level of education, certifications, total years of experience in education, and number of years at their present campus.

Code #'s	Gender	Ethnicity	Current Position	Level of Education	Certifications	Total years of experience in Education	Number of Years at Present Campus

2. Do your teachers follow a prescribed curriculum or are they empowered to make educational decisions?

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS

IRB Approval Number (2014-02-18)/TAMIU & 2014-3008/TAMU)

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this inquiry will describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions before deciding whether to take part. Your participation is voluntary. You can refuse to participate at any time without prejudice or jeopardy to your standing with _____ Independent School District or Texas A & M University. You may choose not to answer a question(s) for any reason. This interview will be transcribed and then we will member-check responses for validity.

Title of Research Study: A Comparison of English Vocabulary Instruction for English Language Learners: In Three Elementary Schools from a U.S.-Mexico Border Community

Principal Investigator/Record of Study Chair:

Carmen Amparo Pompa, Texas A & M University, Doctoral Student, 956.235.1520
John Helfeldt, Ph.D., Texas A & M University, Professor and Record of Study Chair, 979.575.9590

Funding Source: Not applicable.

Purpose of the Research Study: The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast vocabulary instructional strategies that promote academic achievement among English language learners (ELLs) and their peers, in two high-achieving schools and one-low achieving school. Data will be collected from three schools that will also remain anonymous, located in a U.S.-Mexico border community, because two of these consistently earned successful scores from subgroups (i.e., Hispanics, Whites, ELLs and Economically Disadvantaged) as well as their total population. Using the Schema theoretical approach (Ajideh, 2003), effective vocabulary strategies will be identified to determine what teachers in the testing grades (3rd, 4th, and 5th) are implementing to successfully narrow the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs in reading state assessments. Because vocabulary acquisition is both cross-curricular and a challenge for minority populations, it was used as a focus area for the study (Buteau & True, 2009; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009; Hoover & Patton, 2005; National Reading Panel, 2000).

Participation: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in the following.

Principal: One-to-one interview in order to explain the purpose of the study and to gather participant selection data for purposeful sampling of six teachers and one alternate at your campus from 3rd, 4th and 5th grade. The one-to-one interview will last no more than 45 minutes and you will be asked to identify two teachers for grades 3rd, 4th and 5th identifying their gender, ethnicity, current position, level of education, certifications, number of years at their present campus, if they follow a prescribed curriculum or if they are empowered to make educational decisions and total years of experience in education.

Benefits: The experiences you share and information you provide will inform the local district of commonalities found and serve as learning opportunities for each participating school. Additionally, this study will provide information that will possibly become recommendations for improving vocabulary instruction for ELLs, which may be useful to all, as well as inform other schools and districts of recommended practices that may enhance vocabulary learning among ELLs.

Risks: This study will have minimal or no psychological/emotional risks, no risk of physical harm, and is non-experimental. You may feel somewhat uneasy because of the interviews and the teacher observations. Additionally, you may feel slightly uneasy in disclosing personal thoughts about your delivery of vocabulary instruction in fear that your principal may find out what you said. However, all comments are confidential and will not be attributed to any individual participant.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Contacts and Questions: This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Texas A&M International University and Texas A&M, College Station, Division of Research with Aline Lovings. For questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if you have complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, you can contact Dr. Jennifer Coronado, IRB Chair, 956-326-2673, irb@tamiu.edu. If you choose to stop participating in this study for any reason, please contact Carmen A. Pompa, principal investigator, at 956-235-1520 and/or John Helfeldt, Ph.D. at Texas A & M University at jhelfeldt@tamu.edu.

Confidentiality: All one-on-one interviews will be hand written in field notes, transcribed and member-checked for validity. The transcriptions will be coded so that no personally identifiable information is evident. Classroom observation documents will also be analyzed, coded and kept under lock and key. Field notes, classroom observation documents and transcription data will be secured in a locked filing cabinet at the principal investigator's home and destroyed three years after completing the study. The principal investigator's record of study chair is the only individual that may view this information. If results of this study are published or presented at a conference, then all identifiable information will be excluded.

Results of the Study: A summary of the findings will be available upon completion of this study, if requested. If you are interested in receiving this summary, please provide e-mail address to provide a copy of the summary to you:

Signatures:

By signing this document, you are indicating that you fully understand the consent form and its contents. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have been told that participation in this study is voluntary. You are not waiving any legal rights by signing this document.

Printed Name of Participant and Date

Signature of Participant

Printed Name of Principal Investigator and Date

Signature of Principal Investigator

APPENDIX D

CONSENT FORM FOR FACULTY

IRB Approval Number (2014-02-18)/TAMIU & 2014-3008/TAMU

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The person in charge of this inquiry will describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions before deciding whether to take part. Your participation is voluntary. You can refuse to participate at any time without prejudice or jeopardy to your standing with _____ Independent School District or Texas A & M University. You may choose not to answer a question(s) for any reason. This interview will be transcribed and then we will member-check responses for validity.

Title of Research Study: A Comparison of English Vocabulary Instruction for English Language Learners: In Three Elementary Schools from a U.S.-Mexico Border Community

Principal Investigator/Record of Study Chair:

Carmen Amparo Pompa, Texas A & M University, Doctoral Student, 956.235.1520
John Helfeldt, Ph.D., Texas A & M University, Professor and Record of Study Chair, 979.575.9590

Funding Source: Not applicable.

Purpose of the Research Study: The purpose of this study was to compare and contrast vocabulary instructional strategies that promote academic achievement among English language learners (ELLs) and their peers, in two high-achieving schools and one-low achieving school. Data will be collected from three schools that will also remain anonymous, located in a U.S.-Mexico border community, because two of these consistently earned successful scores from subgroups (i.e., Hispanics, Whites, ELLs and Economically Disadvantaged) as well as their total population. Using the Schema theoretical approach (Ajideh, 2003), effective vocabulary strategies will be identified to determine what teachers in the testing grades (3rd, 4th, and 5th) are implementing to successfully narrow the achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs in reading state assessments. Because vocabulary acquisition is both cross-curricular and a challenge for minority populations, it was used as a focus area for the study (Buteau & True, 2009; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009; Hoover & Patton, 2005; National Reading Panel, 2000).

Participation: If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in the following.

Faculty: One-to-one teacher-interviews after the classroom observations. The one-to-one interview will include approximately 5 questions and last 30-45 minutes. You may be asked questions such as: Do you follow a prescribed curriculum or are you empowered to make educational decisions for your students? How many professional development hours in vocabulary instruction have you attended within the last two years? What strategies incorporating effective vocabulary instruction do you implement for your students while teaching a lesson? What constitutes an effective vocabulary program? What's good about your instructional delivery? Are you familiar with the model of culturally responsive teaching? If so, describe? etc.

Benefits: The experiences you share and information you provide will inform the local district of commonalities found and serve as learning opportunities for each participating school. Additionally, this study will provide information that will possibly become recommendations for improving vocabulary instruction for ELLs, which may be useful to all, as well as inform other schools and districts of recommended practices that may enhance vocabulary learning among ELLs.

Risks: This study will have minimal or no psychological/emotional risks, no risk of physical harm, and is non-experimental. You may feel somewhat uneasy because of the interviews and the teacher observations. Additionally, you may feel slightly uneasy in disclosing personal thoughts about your delivery of vocabulary instruction in fear that your principal may find out what you said. However, all comments are confidential and will not be attributed to any individual participant.

Compensation: There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Contacts and Questions: This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Texas A & M International University and Texas A&M, College Station, Division of Research with Aline Lovings. For questions, regarding your rights as a research participant, or if you have complaints, concerns, or questions about the research, you can contact Dr. Jennifer Coronado, IRB Chair, 956-326-2673, irb@tamiu.edu. If you choose to stop participating in this study for any reason, please contact Carmen A. Pompa, principal investigator, at 956-235-1520 and/or John Helfeldt, Ph.D. at Texas A & M University at jhelfeldt@tamu.edu.

Confidentiality: All one-on-one interviews will be hand written in field notes, transcribed and member-checked for validity. The transcriptions will be coded so that no personally identifiable information is evident. Classroom observation documents will also be analyzed, coded and kept under lock and key. Field notes, classroom observation documents and transcription data will be secured in a locked filing cabinet at the principal investigator's home and destroyed three years after completing the study. The principal investigator's record of study chair is the only individual that may view this

information. If results of this study are published or presented at a conference, then all identifiable information will be excluded.

Results of the Study: A summary of the findings will be available upon completion of this study, if requested. If you are interested in receiving this summary, please provide e-mail address to provide a copy of the summary to you:

Signatures:

By signing this document, you are indicating that you fully understand the consent form and its contents. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have been told that participation in this study is voluntary. You are not waiving any legal rights by signing this document.

Printed Name of Participant and Date

Signature of Participant

Printed Name of Principal Investigator and Date

Signature of Principal Investigator

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW AND ARTIFACT CODES

- 100 Principals 101, 102, 103
- 500 Teachers
 - Third Grade: 503(a), (b)
 - Fourth Grade: 504(a), (b)
 - Fifth Grade: 505(a), (b)
 - Alternate: 510 (3rd grade); 520 (4th grade); 530 (5th grade)
- 800 Artifacts
 - Third Grade: 803(a), (b)
 - Fourth Grade: 804(a), (b)
 - Fifth Grade: 805(a), (b)
- HA1 (High-Achieving Campus 1)
- HA2 (High-Achieving Campus 2)
- LA (Low-Achieving Campus)

APPENDIX F

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (TEACHER)

Begin by reviewing the IRB Consent form.

1. Do you follow a prescribed curriculum or are you empowered to make educational decisions for your students?
 - What do you like the best?
 - What are your frustrations?
 - Provide an example of an educational decision you have made for a student.
2. How many professional development sessions dealing with vocabulary instruction or teaching vocabulary have you attended within the last two years? At school or with the district over your teaching career?
 - Provide examples and describe why these practices are successful.
 - How are you accountable for the implementation of such professional development?
 - Are you frequently visited by campus administrators, instructional coordinators, etc. to verify the implementation of effective strategies?
3. What strategies incorporating effective vocabulary instruction do you implement for your students while teaching a lesson? (name the strategies)
 - How frequently do you teach vocabulary?
 - How many ELLs do you currently serve in your classroom?
4. What constitutes an effective vocabulary program?
 - What's good about your instructional delivery?
 - Do you build/activate prior knowledge about language? If so, how?
 - Do you build/activate prior knowledge when asking students to write? If so, how?
 - Do you build/activate prior knowledge when presenting a skill or concept? If so, how?
5. Are you familiar with the model of culturally responsive teaching?
 - If so, describe.....

My goal is to obtain information about how high-achieving schools and their delivery of vocabulary instruction, what's working well and although student demographics are the same what are the similarities and differences with high and low-achieving schools. I will probe into responses from participants, asking for specific examples or descriptions as necessary.

APPENDIX G

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION TOOL

Vocabulary Instruction In Mixed-Ability Classrooms and the Classroom Environment

Name of Teacher: _____ Subject: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____ Time in: _____ Time out: _____

KEY: Strong Observation 2+ (2 or more times observed) OK Observation 1 (observed 1 time only) Not Observed-N.O. (0 observations)	Evidence Observed Strong OK N.O. 2+ 1 0 Circle the one that applies		Evidence Observed Strong OK N.O. 2+ 1 0 Circle the one that applies
Instructional Practices		Classroom Environment	
Preparation for vocabulary instruction through a systematic approach (e.g. separating words into Tiers, implementation of Word maps, graphic organizers, providing student friendly definitions, synonyms, concept attainment, “mental anchors” with visuals, etc.).	2+ 1 0	Teacher communicates high expectations (provides positive reinforcement, respect for the students, and a strong belief in the student’s ability to learn).	2+ 1 0
Explicit Instruction with Modeling (activating/building background knowledge, making connections, word walls, semantic maps- before, during and after reading, multiple encounters of the words are available for students, etc..)	2+ 1 0	Teacher facilitates learning (role is more of a mentor, facilitator within an active learning environment).	2+ 1 0
Assessing students’ current knowledge level of the target lesson vocabulary words, vocabulary foldables, webs, visuals, etc.) created by students (student artifacts).	2+ 1 0	Teacher communicates to parents positive perspectives about their child.	2+ 1 0
Prompting students to assume an active role (e.g., listening, responding, taking notes on journal, providing examples or non-examples) during instruction of new vocabulary terms.	2+ 1 0	Teacher demonstrates cultural sensitivity to all his/her students (provides literature of different cultures, genres, based on the students needs).	2+ 1 0
Allowing the students to read independently through novels, basal stories, and or informational texts at their instructional level.	2+ 1 0		
Asking the students to look for the definition of the word in the dictionary and recording on journal or any type of writing paper.	2+ 1 0	Teacher promotes student classroom discourse (more student talk, less teacher talk; students are provided with	

Pronouncing new words clearly and prompting students to repeat the words chorally, maximizing engagement- engagement of students with student-friendly definitions and classroom discussions.	2+ 1 0	opportunities to develop language acquisition).	2+ 1 0
Asking the students to write the word multiple times (5 times, 10 times, etc.).	2+ 1 0	Teacher includes small group instruction and cooperative learning (opportunities to interact with peers, discussion of vocabulary words with peers, acting more as a facilitator).	2+ 1 0
Students are provided with opportunities to use vocabulary words in context through listening, speaking, reading and writing.	2+ 1 0		
Providing a note-taking scaffold for less proficient readers and English language learners.	2+ 1 0	Classroom environment is conducive to learning (bulletin boards display student work-artifacts, scaffolds are provided for support, etc.).	2+ 1 0
Checking for understanding with concrete task/questions that require critical thinking/immediate and corrective feedback from teacher.	2+ 1 0		
Providing students with a list of vocabulary and spelling words to study for test at the end of the week.	2+ 1 0	Teacher lesson plans are available and on target.	2+ 1 0
Students are allowed to speak in their Native language when they do not know a vocabulary word in English.	2+ 1 0	There is a teacher and student relationship.	2+ 1 0

***NOTE: Some strategies are NOT as effective as others. Please record your observations based on factual events occurring in the classroom being observed.**(Adapted from Kate Kinsella, Kevin Feldman, 10/03, Indiana University of Pennsylvania). Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

APPENDIX H

CAMPUS INTERVIEW ANALYSIS:

SAMPLE FOR CODING AND IDENTIFYING THEMES

Code: HA1	101	103	104	105
Curriculum Possible THEME: Empowered to make educational decisions for students as needed.	Follow a prescribed curriculum from the district. Empowered to make educational decisions as a team.	(a) Follow the scope and sequence from the district. Differentiation is enforced for struggling students. (b) Follow the curriculum from the scope and sequence. “Unless the kids are struggling I implement other strategies and take advantage of all the teachable moments.	(a) Follow the scope and sequence curriculum and the resources provided by the district. (b) Follow a lesson plan based on the scope and sequence; “but if I need to re-teach a skill I do it”.	(a) Follow the SS that the district provides; “but I make changes to fit the needs of my kids”. (b) Follow the SS but “have the liberty to implement whatever works with our class”.
Like Best Possible THEME: Positivity about the curriculum and liking both.	Attitude from this administrator is very positive—“What is good for one is good for everybody” “Let’s make it work!”	(a) The prescribed curriculum because there is certainty that the required skills are taught. (b) “I like both. If my kids are struggling I re-teach and find other ways to teaching the skills”.	(a) “I like the curriculum because it is aligned with the TEKS; in this school we are in unison with everything that we teach”. (b) “I like that everything is so structured because of the CBAs (content based assessments) and how they measure everything that should have been taught”.	(a) “Our students are predominantly Spanish speakers so it is important to cover more vocabulary for their success”.
Frustrations Possible THEME: Time deficiency.	N/A	(a) Time; not having enough time to teach the skill. “Sometimes I wish I could extend the skill to longer than 45 minutes and/or extend the school day even more”. (b) “Especially at the beginning of the year we don’t have	(a) Time; “because we have so much to cover and not enough time to do everything”. (b) Time; “we wish we had more time to cover everything.” “Even though we follow a tight schedule and now	(a) “We have very little time to make this happen”. (b) “Make arrangements for assignments missed –so students don’t fall behind.”

		enough time to do what we need to do”.	we have 15 minutes extra added to our day, we still need more time”.	
Educational decision for a student Possible THEME: Success for all students.	N/A	(a) Student to the RtI committee for possible SpEd services. “I asked mom to please help me, help her child”. (b) “One of my students is ADHD so when he would take tests he could not focus. I brought it up to the committee and now his tests are oral and he is passing”.	(a) “I provided more practice items to prepare the student for the math test”.	(a) The vocabulary that he has is also in Spanish but not necessarily the academic Spanish needed to pass the test. “Hopefully this will be enough for him to be successful”.
Professional Development sessions about Vocabulary instruction within the last two years Possible THEME: PD deficiency .	N/A	(a) 5 to 6 sessions (b) One training	(a) 2 sessions during the summer (4 hours) and one session during the year (6 hours) (b) 1 session during the year (6 hours) and 1 session during the summer (2 hours)	(a) None (b) At least three sessions
Visited by campus administrators and coordinators for accountability of implementation of effective strategies Possible THEME: Monitoring from administration.	N/A	(a) “Administrators come weekly; the coordinators have not visited me this year”. (b) “Many walkthroughs by our administrators; the math coordinator visited our campus but not my classroom”.	(a) “Yes, we have informal walkthroughs (about 2 per month). And more formal per month by campus administrators (2 or 3). Instructional coordinators.	(a) “Walkthroughs by our administrators, maybe 2 or 3 times a month.”